

Harry Potter and the power of knowledge

Summary:

Harry Potter is an intelligent person who devotes his life to everything magic has to offer. But he also realizes not everything in life has to do with magic and devotes his life to bettering himself.

His purpose, curing his mother from the coma she is in since January 1982.

Neville is the boy-who-lived and raised to like his title. Dumbledore is manipulative of Neville and overlooks Harry for the first while.

Harry will do many things which will be consistent with the version from 'nkari127' "Knowledge is power" where the situations will be mostly the same. This story was reposted since 'Fettucini' deleted his version of 'Knowledge is power'. They didn't finish the stories which I am definitely going to do but for that I want to write my own storyline and thus with differences.

Harry is independent, helpful, using grey (light and dark) magic and will be aware of his heritage as Lord Potter. Eventual Harry will meet Fleur and that will be the main pairing of the story.

October 31st, 1981

As the imposing, snakelike figure walked through the village, people were bustling around in costumes and holding lanterns for the Halloween celebration. Though he was wearing a glamour to prevent interference from his task, this child he had to take care of, people could feel he was not to be messed with so they moved out of his way. As he moved past the last Muggle house, he could feel the ancient anti-apparition wards of the Manor up ahead.

While he continued on he mused to himself he was lucky to have his spies so deeply entrenched in the Order and the circles of the two candidates of the prophecy. He had planned on taking longer to breach the ancient wards of the Manor, because he would have expected Dumbledore to better protect the families of the candidates. But this was a good surprise for him. 'Probably because of their trust in the Fidelius and their secret-keepers', he thought.

As he neared the front door of the house, he saw movement in one of the windows to his right and knew he was noticed. He blasted the front door to smithereens and heard the husband screaming to someone upstairs. 'Thank you for locating my target', he thought to himself as he started repelling the ridiculously easy attack from the man. He briefly considered leaving him alive and invite him to join his Death Eaters once his precious child was gone, but it was just a second later that he uttered two words out of habit and a sickly green spell hit the man in his chest.

He was already headed for the stairs as the thud of a body hitting the ground was heard. When he entered the nursery he had to shield himself from the volley of attacks coming from the woman standing in front of a crib. As she paused he said, "it's not necessary for you to die woman, stand aside and I'll let you live". 'Like that would ever happen', he added silently. The woman quickly realized that she stood no chance if her husband had lost without causing any sort of damage to the Dark Lord. She fell down her knees and pleaded with him. "Not Neville, please take me instead. He's just a baby, what threat could he possibly be to you?" The Dark Lord visibly held back for a moment as he felt magic swirling around the baby while the woman kept muttering "Not Neville, take me". He raised his wand, rushed in anticipation of the unknown magic the boy was outputting and quickly killed the mother, "Foolish girl, you should have stepped aside."

He approached the crib and looked down at the small boy with the same look as his mother, 'so this is the child of the prophecy', he thought. He knew his instincts were usually correct and though Pettigrew was earlier with his report on being made the secret-keeper of the Potters, he knew it was more likely that the pure-blooded child would be his potential vanquisher. If the boy already had an aura that he could feel, this would become a powerful child indeed. 'It is best that I take care of him now', he thought. 'Though if it weren't for the prophecy I might have considered letting Lucius raise him as an ally.'

He raised his wand and for the second time in that room uttered the words to end the boy's life. "AVADA KEDAVRA". The next minute a dark mist floated out of the room, leaving only the robes and wand of the Dark Lord, together with a boy crying in his crib for the attention of his mother, with a lightning-bolt-shaped cut on his forehead.

As Neville was crying in his crib, a headmaster in the Northern part of Scotland noticed one of his many trinkets whistling and grabbed the tail of the phoenix while mentally asking his familiar to transport him to Longbottom Manor. They appeared in the entrance hall of the mansion and Dumbledore immediately noticed Frank Longbottom, auror captain of the MLE, lying dead near the door. Curse marks on the walls showed it must have been an intense but short battle.

As he started to search the other rooms on the ground floor he heard a baby crying upstairs and headed up there with his wand in hand. He knew there were no more enemy wizards in the house but it never hurt to be prepared. As he entered the nursery he saw the body of Alice Longbottom lying a few feet away from the crib which carried Neville, one of the candidates of the prophecy that he heard nearly a year and a half before.

Neville, though crying with a bloodied cut on his forehead was none the worse for wear and Dumbledore immediately realized what had happened. He looked around and finally saw the robes and wand in the corner, which he recognized from several battles and from long ago when Olivander invited him to see the wand made with the feather of his phoenix.

He scanned Neville with his wand and noticed traces of the Killing Curse on his forehead. 'The prophecy must have protected him', he mused to himself. He scanned the room closely and saw no body of his old student, 'though mangled it may have been, there still would have been a body'. He then realized that Tom must truly have immortalized himself and sighed. "He will return, Neville must be prepared," he said quietly.

Three months later the Potters were attacked by a group of leftover Death Eaters who had cornered Pettigrew for the location of their home in Godric's Hollow. On the 26th of Januari, James Potter was killed in a duel when he was distracted because Lily Evans Potter was tortured and he tried to protect her. Lily was then subjected to the Cruciatus for questioning of the location of the Dark Lord. Though Lily worked for the Unspeakables, Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rabastan LeStrange reasoned that since James Potter was an auror captain, he would know where the Dark Lord was hiding and would have told his wife. For they realized their Lord couldn't be killed and would return, hopefully with their help. While Lily Potter did not know of the location of the Dark Lord, she also

didn't say anything to the contrary. It was only when Bellatrix threatened her child that she started screaming and wailing, despite minutes of being tortured with the Cruciatus curse. When Bellatrix Lestrange finally fired an unknown curse at Harry, Lily Evans Potter sacrificed herself by jumping in front of her child.

When the aurors came, the death eaters were subdued quickly because they had the element of surprise. However, Lily Potter was in a coma due to being hit by the unknown curse and couldn't be awakened by the healers at St Mungo's. Dumbledore realized that Sirius Black would have been a Death Eater spy to reveal the location of the Potters and issued an arrest warrant to the aurors. Harry Potter witnessed the death of his father and his mother's fate that led to him being orphaned and would remember the horrible event when in the presence of dementors. Dumbledore gave Harry to Hagrid and told him to bring him to the Dursleys and that he would wait for him there. The next morning, Harry Potter was laid on the front doormat of number 4, Privet Drive in Little Whinging, Surrey.

The next day as Harry was discovered by an enraged Vernon Dursley, Sirius Black was cornered and stunned in the middle of the street by aurors in a Muggle neighborhood after killing thirteen Muggles and Peter Pettigrew with one curse. All that was found of Peter was a finger, and he was awarded the Order of Merlin posthumously for trying to apprehend a known criminal. Sirius was sent to Azkaban without a trial for he was shouting in the middle of the street 'I killed them', over and over with tears streaming down his face when the aurors encountered him on that street. Probably for realizing his Lord was destroyed by a one year old boy, or so the aurors reasoned.

After that a flurry of things happened, Augusta Longbottom assumed guardianship of her grandson Neville and would raise him as the next Lord Longbottom, the Boy-Who-Lived. She would receive help if required from the headmaster. Dumbledore kept the prophecy to himself but realized that Neville would be held in check by the imposing woman whom he held a position in the Wizengamot. He would train the boy a bit before his eleventh birthday so that he could take on a leadership position at Hogwarts. This would ensure he would be placed in Gryffindor and assume the role he was destined for. All over England, people raised their glasses "To Neville Longbottom, the boy-who-lived!"

July 30th, 1988

Remus watched as Harry was running across the field with the ball in front of him. It was the summer season football playoffs (soccer) and his ward was part of this year's team for South-London. They were playing against Manchester city in the junior league, which was with children till ages twelve.

Many of the older pupils and their parents were miffed about the fact that an eight-year old was selected for the first team this year. They all wanted to be part of this team because it was selected on skill and not selected by age. If selected, it gave the parents a chance to brag about their child to the other parents during training and of course in their own social circles.

Harry, soccer player for only this third summer was attacking midfielder and basically one of the most important players of the team. Several older children were expecting to be selected and Remus couldn't blame them. After all, they were four years ahead of his charge and probably had more experience but as he watched Harry from the sidelines, he knew the coach asking Harry to play for the first team this summer was not a mistake. If Remus hadn't known any better, he was sure that Harry was using magic to assist in his graceful moves and speed while moving across the field.

You see, the child known as Harry Potter was a wizard, though one couldn't tell that of course by looking at him. He wasn't the perfect child but he was definitely one of the smarter children in these circles. Harry was well-mannered, smart and had pretty much made friends with almost the entire school. Therefore, he was loved by his teachers in Muggle school; he was a child that seemed to draw people to him, a natural born leader.

Even Remus considered himself to be in that category, people that are drawn to Harry. 'But it was not always so', he thought as he remembered those days where he lost Harry to those horrible Dursleys. They were so horrible in Remus' eyes; you couldn't possibly call them relatives of Harry's.

He was working as a Muggle high school teacher because of his condition and today was the first day of the new school year. Not September 1st as with Hogwarts but it still gave him a funny feeling. He had been working at this school for two and half years now.

Since after that horrible week in the beginning of '82, he had vowed to stay away from the Wizarding World....

First his friends were all murdered or no longer deserved to call themselves his friends. He still felt the wolf in him snarl at the thought of the Potters being betrayed to servants of the then former Dark Lord.

After a night of drinking himself down the drain and waking up with a headache that would give itself a spot in the top three (including the Marauder-induced nights) he visited the Ministry of Magic to see where Harry was currently.

"Good afternoon, my name is Remus Lupin. I'm here to inform about the location of the child of some good friends of mine, the Potters..."

To his irritation the lady at the reception of the ministry did nothing to answer him except give a curt reply;

"I'm sorry mister Lupin, but employees of the ministry are not allowed to disclose the location of a child to known werewolves. I'm sure you can understand the problem, have a nice day."

She said this in such a sweet voice, laced with an enormous amount sarcasm that would put even Sirius to shame that it was all Remus could do not to jump over the desk and strangle the woman. After that, he floo'ed to the headmasters' office to ask Dumbledore where Harry was staying. Dumbledore informed him in his grandfatherly voice that Remus was really started to hate;

"Harry is with his relatives Remus. I've placed powerful bloodwards around their house to ensure his location remains a secret from the Death Eaters that escaped prison."

"What about me, didn't Lily and James mention that Harry should be placed in my care in their will," Remus asked.

Dumbledore replied, "Alas, in case of death, only the godparents of the child can make claim for guardianship and we both know that both Sirius and Alice are not in the position to do that. In this case, he is to be placed with his last remaining blood-relatives but it is possible to apply for custody at the ministry."

Remus knew that he stood no chance to gain custody of Harry as his condition was not only not safe, it also prevented him from having a steady income. It was a lost cause.....

His inner wolf howled and he drunk the stocks of Firewhiskey almost noticeably higher in those few days. After that he left the Wizarding World and went looking for a convenient job in the Muggle world.

He still couldn't believe how easy it was for him to schedule his vacation days before and after the full moon in the education system. Replacement teachers were held on call by the school and were usually the first steps of working full time for the school. He himself was part of this method and, after many jobs in the Muggle world that fired him the moment his absences were a problem, he found himself being a substitute teacher in primary school.

After a year of this, the local science teacher died of cancer and Remus was suggested for the position by many of his colleagues whom he had always accepted to replace during their absences. Remus was honored to be nominated for the position but politely denied the school principal, saying he was unable to teach for two days each month because of an illness that he had successfully hidden until now.

The principal refused his denial, saying that's what substitute teachers were for and said that she had never had this many positive votes for nomination by both parents and colleague teachers.

He had to stop his musings of the past when Harry's assist and follow-up of the striker made the first goal of the game. Remus cheered with the rest of the parents on the sidelines and was incredibly proud when he shouted, "That's my boy!" Harry barely glanced at him, but he recognized the proud acceptance in his eyes when they made eye contact. He went back to his musings when he realized it was almost three years ago when he first made eye contact with Harry and he once again found his cub.

Remus was walking in the school for his second year as a science teacher and was on his way towards the first lesson of first grade. These children were usually small, excited and a bit apprehensive of new teachers.

But as soon as Remus entered, his inner wolf stirred, smelling something familiar. It took him a moment to recognize the feeling as a good thing and that's when it hit him. Prongslet, his cub, Harry, he was here... He scanned the classroom for a familiar head of black hair as he introduced himself as Mr. Lupin, the new science teacher. But as soon as he mentioned his name, the head of an identical copy of his old friend only younger shot up and made eye contact with his teacher. Remus thought he saw a bit of deliberation, apprehension and 'recognition?' in those familiar green eyes.

His wolf side was howling at the thought of finding his best friends' son once again but he kept on teaching as usual. It was imperative that he taught this class to the best of his ability and kept his reputation amongst the pupils as the best teacher in the school. As he taught the class, plans were forming in the back of his mind for how to find out more about him. He could inform with the other teachers but as a new pupil of the school, not much would be known about him. He would have to wait at least a few weeks before inquiring with his colleagues and there was nothing other that he could do about it.

He could offer extra tutelage to the boy but that would only be necessary if he didn't understand the material. And if the accidental magic and saying words such as 'mama', 'lily', 'dad', 'prongs', 'moony', 'james', 'sirius' and 'remus' at six months old was anything to go by, help for his cub would not be required.

He would have to wait and keep a very, very close eye on the boy. He would inspect all his friends and do background checks on every name he could find, from babysitters to the postman. He would not put it past Dumbledore to put a squib or loyal witch in the neighborhood to keep an eye on Harry.

Though he knew the wolf inside of him still considered Harry his cub, Remus himself had given up on the idea long ago. But now, now he could reconnect with him, become a friend of sorts and teach him the beginnings of magic if his guardians allowed it.

So Remus waited, he waited and observed everything he could about the boy. He often cast a Disillusionment Charm on himself so he could follow him safely home from school. He seemed not to have many friends but he knew teachers did not see everything of a child's life. His cousin was not the nicest one, being caught bullying

other pupils of the school, including Harry and with that kept other children from approaching Harry. But Harry didn't let it get to him; he was loved by the teachers because he was one of those few pupils who showed himself intelligent at such an early age.

But it was after a few months of teaching Harry that Remus became concerned. He was giving his lecture about the tests given to everybody at this time of year and assured every pupil that they did adequately, if not excellent. He knew the almost perfect scores Harry had in all subjects by heart and therefore was confused when Harry winced quite visibly. Usually when praised by his favorite teacher (he knew he was, it was not arrogance), Harry would beam in pride and Remus would feel his parental side warm up.

Although this time, that was not the case. So Remus did what any teacher would do for his favorite student and asked him to stay after class.

"Harry, is something wrong?" asked Remus.

Harry kept looking down and mumbled something softly in response. It was only due to Remus' werewolf hearing that he heard the words "it hurts...." He immediately grew concerned and eyed the boy. He seemed withdrawn and flinched back visibly when Remus reached for him.

"Could you tell me what hurts? Is it that you weren't satisfied with your scores? Did your guardians give you a talking to about the results?" Remus knew this wasn't it, because other than the open questions, it wasn't possible to receive higher scores than Harry had. He was the only pupil in the schools history to reach such a level. The werewolf was therefore quite confused when Harry looked him in the eye, his eyes watering and quickly tried to run out of the classroom.

Remus held him back by grabbing his arm softly (or so he thought) and horror grew on his face when Harry screamed in pain. He quickly let go but the teachers walking in the hallway outside the classroom heard the scream and immediately entered to see what was going on. They looked at Harry who was rubbing his arm in pain and their respected colleague with a look of horror on his face. When his colleagues looked to him for an explanation, Remus only shook his head, clueless over what had just gone wrong.

One of the younger female teachers sank to her knees before Harry and asked in a gentle tone;

"What's wrong, Mr. Potter?"

"It hurts," Harry replied.

"Why don't we have the school nurse look at your arm then?" The female teacher gently slipped her hand through Harry's as she asked this.

When Harry left the classroom Remus immediately disillusioned himself after the rest of his colleagues made themselves scarce and followed the two to the nurse. When he heard what Harry confessed about his relatives beating him because of getting better grades than his cousin Dudley, Remus saw white. After the end of his confession, the nurse called the police and Harry was removed immediately from their care. Since it was only a one time offence, they came away with a fine and regular visits from the department of child protective services.

The police asked if he had any other relatives he could stay with but said that his aunt Marge was not of his family, so he didn't want to go there. When it sounded like he'd rather go somewhere else they asked him about it and what he said made Remus' heart soar.

He replied, "Can't I stay with Moony?"

The Nurse asked him who that was and in reply he pointed to Remus and said;

"Moony. You know, Mr. Lupin."

The teachers and nurse all looked at him apologetically and started to deny his request when Remus answered and asked in a surprisingly soft tone so as not to raise his own hopes.

"Would you like that, Harry?"

The teachers looked on in bafflement and disapproval as their colleague falsely raised the hopes of this brilliant young pupil. Remus immediately understood their reaction and started to explain.

"There's something you don't know. Harry Potter is a child who I've known since the day he was born. His parents were some of my best friends in school and after they were murdered, he was placed with his last remaining blood relatives. I'm guessing that since Harry mentioned my school nickname of their invention, 'Moony', that Harry recognized me the moment I introduced myself as his science teacher. Am I right, Harry?"

Harry nodded his head and looked up hopefully at the policemen and the woman from child protective services. The woman looked questioningly at Remus and Remus could read the question on her face.

"Though I might have been mentioned in their will (thank god Lily insisted on a Muggle will), I was not eligible to adopt Harry. I was told that only godparents had more right to guardianship of the child than blood relatives in case of something happening to his or her parents. Though if it was the case that there was even the slightest possibility that I could have adopted him, I would have done so. I'm sorry I didn't mention this but I guess it makes sense for you now, me wanting to know so much about him."

Surprisingly, the woman from child protective services spoke up and asked him the million dollar question.

"Would you still like to adopt Mr Potter, Mr Lupin?"

Remus, to the amusement of his colleagues, eagerly started nodded his head and replied affirmative. Harry, seeing this felt a warm glow in himself and nodded his head immediately when the woman turned towards him before she could ask her question. All adults chuckled at the eagerness shown on the face of the boy who roughly three hours ago was broken out in tears.

The woman replied, "Very well, I will search for the Potters' will at their lawyers and if you are indeed mentioned in this document, I will make the adoption happen. Do you understand what this entails Mr. Lupin?" Remus shook his head negative.

"For the adoption of a minor there usually is an inspection of the home, the financial situation of the adoptive parent(s), the child's own finances and a history check on the adult(s). If all this checks

out, you will receive temporary custody of the child for the first half year, while regular visits from my department will check up on the living situation of the child. If this period is passed without complaint, you will gain guardianship of the child. Are both parties in agreement with this?"

Remus and Harry again nodded their heads affirmatively very excessively to the amusement of the adults present. After that day, Remus and Harry had always lived under the same roof.....

Remus shook himself when he was once again interrupted from his musings by the groan of disappointed parents when Manchester made a goal and the score was tied, 1-1. He was not surprised to see Harry himself clapping for the other team, since he was raised by Remus to always value another person's (or in this case another team's) skill. How those teachings came to be was because of the reaction he gave to Remus' 'furry little problem' or should he say the lack of a reaction. It made Remus smile as he remembered that day.....

Remus encountered Harry in his room studying the books he had 'borrowed' from which Remus taught the upper years of the school. The only incentive Remus had given after explaining he was a wizard was the fact that even though he would be receiving his magical education when he would become eleven, it was important to keep up with his Muggle studies. Harry was currently in his fourth grade (ages 8 and 9) study material while he himself was only six years old. Remus knew Harry was smart, since he was his teacher for almost a year now but he was still surprised at exactly how smart his charge really seemed to be. When he asked to borrow his books, Remus thought he would want to check up on the second year of school. However, it seemed he was going through books as if he was just browsing.

"Harry?" Remus asked to get his attention.

Harry looked up and smiled shyly when he saw Remus looking at his own books.

"There is something we need to talk about. Do you remember that your parents and you used to call me 'Moony'?"

Harry nodded and kept silent, getting an apprehensive feeling from his adopted 'uncle'.

"Well, it's like this," Remus started. He sighed, and continued. "I'm a werewolf, this is the reason I was deemed unsafe to adopt you in the Wizarding World. Have you ever heard of this, do you know what a werewolf is?"

Harry shook his head negative.

Remus continued a bit apprehensive. "A werewolf is a dark creature which transforms once a month on the night of the full moon into a raging wolf that isn't of a conscious mind. It rages through everything it encounters and will most likely kill anyone on its path, whether it is his or her brother, mother, wife or son. It is lethally allergic to silver and its skin is resistant to magic. Do you realize what I am telling you? What I am?"

Harry nodded slowly, connections forming in to his mind though still no horror or apprehension on his face visible. "You are dangerous, during these transformations...." Remus nodded and started to ask if he wanted another guardian but Harry continued. "Where do you go on those nights, into the forbidden room?"

The forbidden room was a room in the back of the apartment which was locked with magic so Harry couldn't enter it and silenced from the inside. Not that Harry had tried because Remus had told him he was never to go in there if he wanted Remus to stay his guardian.

Remus nodded, visibly relieved that Harry was not trying to get away from him. "Yes, in that room which I want to show you just this once is a silver cage magically and structurally reinforced so that not even the wolf can get out. If it did, the room is still locked with magic and steel bars in the door so it is really impossible for me to escape that room while in wolf-form."

As they talked, they walked towards the room in the back and by now they were in front of the door. Remus opened it with his wand and led Harry in. Harry looked at the cage with pity in his eyes and turned back to Remus. The werewolf, though surprised to see tears in his charges' eyes, was even more surprised when Harry hugged him. He felt the strange warmth of acceptance from the boy who was in some points so different from his parents, but in times like

these, they were pretty much the same. "I'm sorry you have to go through that every month, is there something I can do to help? Can I safely watch one time please?"

Remus, still feeling the warmth of acceptance, told him of the Wolfsbane Potion he could order through owl post though it was expensive because it was difficult to brew. He also told him of the times where his father and Sirius were with him during the full moon in their Animagus forms. He had to explain what an Animagus was and how to accomplish it and immediately saw Harry's eyes glinting with new knowledge of magic and his parents.

As Remus woke up from his memories, he looked at the time and saw that there were only a few minutes left. The score was still 1-1, Harry's team was in possession of the ball and advancing on the opponent's goal. As the ball was passed to Harry within reach of the goal, Remus was nearly quivering with anticipation. Then it happened, one second Harry passed the ball to his team mate, the next he had it returned to him and after another second the ball was in the goal. "He scored," Remus muttered softly and the next moment the crowd went wild. Remus was kissed quite enthusiastically on the mouth by the woman next to him out of glee. 'Ah, hot single moms, you have got to love them', he thought to himself.

As Harry was raised in the aftergame celebrations by his team, he locked his eyes with Remus and shook his head amusedly. His 'uncle' did not know how to react anymore to the attention of a woman even though his stories of the past would suggest otherwise. As Harry left towards the lockers he saw his uncle take on the challenge of talking to Mike's mom and gave Harry something to think about. 'Besides me and his teaching, he hasn't really got anything for himself'. He knew Remus was preparing for tomorrow of course but Harry was thinking in more of a general way. He put the thought on hold for a while and knew he would have to spend more time thinking on it and finding out his uncle's interests in both Muggle and magical worlds.

As he left the locker rooms, while being slapped on the back by his team mates he saw his uncle waiting at the door. His face was flushed and his eyes were unfocussed. Harry of course took full advantage after all the times Remus managed to embarrass him with stories of old.

"So, was I the only one to score a hit or did you leave it with just the assist of Mike's mom who you were kissing back happily?"

Remus just shook his head and started for the comeback. "You're way too young to be talking about women with me young man. Once you've managed to score on more than one field we'll talk. You do realize that since I'm your guardian, it is my responsibility to give you the birds and the bees talk."

Harry's face flushed when he realized what his uncle was talking about. Though he was only in third grade, he was teaching himself from the books of secondary school and his uncle said he was learning the material for approximately 12-13 year olds. He had read novels for students above that age however and knew what the 'birds and the bees talk' involved. Not the specifics mind you, but references in those novels gave a rough draft which embarrassed Harry thoroughly.

Remus, seeing his charge getting embarrassed by the topic of the conversation knew his comeback was hit-worthy. Though Harry was scarily mature at times, some things are just not possible to talk about without getting flustered at seven years old.

"Congratulations on the win by the way, I don't know how you manage it sometimes. It's almost like your using magic to play. Come on, lets get something to eat on the way back and we'll watch a movie afterwards. You'll have to go to bed early tonight though; we have a long day tomorrow." Remus continued after Harry could not come up with a reply to the birds and the bees talk.

On the ride home from soccer, Harry was bristling in anticipation for tomorrow.

Tomorrow was Harry's eight birthday and he would start his magical education. Remus had told him that he would help him a bit to prepare for school but in no way was he to receive a wand before his eleventh birthday and perform magic at home. His first reason; the 'Decree for the Reasonable Restriction for Underage Sorcery' tracked magic performed by the wands of underage wizards and witches and because of their situation, it wouldn't be a good idea to receive a visit from the Ministry of Magic. Secondly, the magical core

of a young child was still too unstable to perform controlled magic. That didn't mean there was nothing to be learned however.

Remus had told him of his parents the day after the adoption papers were signed and Harry, with tears in his eyes from knowing that they didn't die in a car accident, requested they visit his mother in St. Mungo's Hospital the next day. Ever since that day, they visited his mother once a year on Christmas day and Harry would sit all day by his mother. Remus would occasionally check up on him throughout the day, but otherwise leave him alone with his mother. Harry spoke to his mother about his life, both the good with Remus and the bad at the Dursleys. He made a vow that first visit to repay his mother for her sacrifice by dedicating his life to curing her.

If Harry wanted to one day cure his mother he reasoned to himself that he would have to learn as much magic as he could. It wasn't the case that his whole life revolved around that goal however. Harry also wanted to live his life to the fullest and enjoy his magical education. He wanted to visit Diagon Alley after all the stories he'd heard from his guardian and to explore the world his father grew up in. Most of all however, after hearing he was a wizard at such a young age and knowing what lay ahead of him he really wanted enter the magical world.

July 31st, 1988

"Boy! Get up!"

Harry shot up, shaking violently as he remembered his life at the Dursleys. Ever since Remus had taken him away from his horrible relatives he had nightmares on the night before his birthday and would wake up violently. He checked his alarm clock and saw it was 5:15 in the morning. Thinking that he rather wouldn't wake up like that again, he started getting ready for the day.

As he put on his training outfit, he started listing in his mind what he needed to do once he got to Diagon Alley. He would need to get money from Gringotts, where he would get to see a goblin for the first time in his life. He realized that today he would be doing a lot of wizarding things for the first time of his life, since he was finally reentering the Wizarding World.

Once he had money he wanted to check out the bookshop, since it would probably be the longest stop of the day. He wanted books on every subject to start getting ready for his magical education, not only that but he also just wanted to read more about the Wizarding World in general, since it was the world he belonged to. He tried to pester Remus about what books he would need, but Remus only said that he would leave him on his own in the shop and let him search the shelves by himself. His reasons were that Harry needed to form his own opinion about the various subjects of magic, the informational value of books and what he needed to start his magical education, like he did in the Muggle world. Harry agreed immediately, thinking this kind of stimulation from his guardian was his way to prevent 'sheep' as Remus always so fondly says. 'Sheep' are what the bigger part of the Wizarding World consists of, according to Remus. Since the people ignore to form their own opinions and just go along with the prejudice that exists in the Wizarding World.

He also wanted to take a look at brooms and books about Quidditch. Remus had told him several things about his parents, including the fact that his father was a Quidditch player. This of course entailed all there was about the sport, with brooms; how did they fly ("Magic, duh!"), the broom sport itself; how many and which players there were and of course which position his father player. It's not that he wanted to have his own broom, since it wasn't possible to fly

anyway; it's that he saw this as a thing to connect with his father. Knowing he had loved flying gave Harry the incentive to do well on a broom. Remus couldn't deny his charge any attempt at connecting to his parents so he quickly agreed and tried to come up with a way for Harry to learn how to fly.

He had negotiated with Remus to check out Knockturn Alley. When his uncle described Diagon Alley and tried to swallow the word 'knockturn', Harry tried his best to harvest every bit of knowledge about that part of the alley that Remus had. Remus, knowing he would never survive the continuous questions of a curious Harry, agreed to tell him about it on the condition that he would not go down that alley by himself. Harry for his part, agreed reluctantly since he wanted to know why Remus tried to deny him knowledge of something. As the first words came out of Remus' mouth, he was immediately interrupted by his charge....

"Knockturn Alley is a dark alley....." Remus started but Harry of course interrupted when anything was in any way unclear.

"What do you mean 'dark' alley? How can an alley be 'dark'? Is it that there isn't enough sunlight, are the buildings that high? Doesn't the alley have any lights, torches, or whatever you use for such a thing?" His 'nephew' asked him before he could continue.

Harry had taken to calling Remus 'uncle Remus' sometimes and as a result, Remus had started seeing and calling him his nephew.

Remus sighed, his charge really was intelligent. But sometimes it was hard on Remus when every misconception of wording or phrases was bombarded with questions where Remus usually had to reply 'it just is'. As usual, his nephew was correct, an alley can't be dark but Remus had at least some information on which way to continue.

"The alley isn't dark exactly, it's just that in that alley, several shops and vendors sell dark items. Items such as books on dark magic, magical paraphernalia such as cursed items, potion ingredients such as blood of a virgin, whores, slaves and who knows what else is sold there. These things are considered dark because they are frowned upon or even illegal in the eyes of the Ministry of Magic. There are more shops, places to stay overnight and other things for the 'dark wizard'. The alley can be a dangerous place, at night especially

which is when most business takes place there. People are robbed, raped and killed in that alley if they aren't careful which is why it is not a place for a child to be wandering alone," Remus explained warningly.

Harry, though warned excessively, still hadn't lost his interest and couldn't wait to see the place. Though he knew Remus was not prejudiced, the ministry certainly was and Harry couldn't imagine why such a place would exist if it was all bad. He suspected that the alley would have things that the ministry would rather keep from the general public and prevented this by promoting the bad image of the infamous Knockturn Alley. The fact that the shops there were still open and running even with such a reputation meant that they would be selling quality things where people are loyal customers. Harry kept his musings to himself for Remus, though not prejudiced, would keep hammering the subject until he was pissing in his pants so to speak.

'If I recounted all the stories Remus has told about Diagon and Knockturn Alley, I should be able to make my way through there with my eyes closed', Harry thought. But he knew that the place would be something that he would have to take in for himself, some things just aren't possible to describe with words. He had already spoken about returning to the alley every once in a while to shop for new books, keep up with the wizarding news and other stuff available there. But to Harry, it was mainly a way to stay in the Wizarding World, his world.

Harry finished his stretches and ran fairly quickly, and after a few sit-ups and pushups he decided to get a shower. Though he wasn't old enough to start a full training schedule because he was still growing, Remus had told him that it was important to keep up the strength of one's body. At first, it was a simple way to counteract four years of malnourishment, since it had resulted in some small growth failure. Growth at young age is very important, since it determines the growth of the body in the future years. Remus had discreetly consulted a healer and she advised some nutrient potions and lots of exercise. But after a year, when he was back on the average growth schedule, he decided to continue with his body training and chose to play some sports. He was only six at that time so it was a surprise that Remus agreed to let him choose for himself. He joined a martial arts sport called Tai Chi to improve his movements and soccer for team sport and conditional training. When his uncle told

him that any sort of sport besides Quidditch and broom racing was alien in the Wizarding World, Harry wondered why they weren't all a bunch of fat people. When he asked that question, his werewolf guardian shot in a fit of laughter and after a few minutes gave his standard reply to such a question; "Magic."

When Harry exited the shower dry and clean he walked to the mirror to make his hair somewhat manageable for the day. He put in his Muggle contact lenses and the moment he saw his reflection, he screamed with all his might to hopefully do some serious damage to his uncle's werewolf hearing;

"AAAAAAAAAAAAH..... REMUS! GET YOUR WOLF ARSE HERE RIGHT NOW!"

Remus entered his nephews bedroom with a way to smug grin on his sleepy face and replied without missing a beat;

"What? Don't you like it?"

His normally black-haired, green-eyed nephew was now sporting longer blond hair and hazel brown eyes which reminded the werewolf of the eyes of the father of his charge. When he saw his charge was not amused with this latest prank which violated the pact made a few months back about shampoos and other personal care products, he started to explain.

"It's just a potion to hide your appearance for today in Diagon and a charm on your contacts. You'll get the cure potion when we get back tonight and I'll take off the charm. We don't want to let headmaster Dumbledore know you're in my care before we have to. I'll be hiding my own appearance under a glamour charm but since some people can see through those things, I had to think of something better for you. You look like the ultimate version of a pureblood scion, you should be proud of the way you look right now"

"I like my own look just fine, thank you very much," Harry replied. "But I suppose for a day it isn't too much of a problem," he said as he tied his long hair behind his back in a tail. He just hoped he wouldn't attract too much attention to himself with his new looks.

As Remus went back to his room to wash up for the day, Harry went downstairs to prepare breakfast for them. They didn't really have

tasks in the house, just the normal 'clean up your room' order every now and then only when his room was full of open books and notes from his studies. But Harry saw it as a responsibility as a member of this 'family?'..... 'house?'..... Remus agreed to teach him the basics and left Harry by himself after that to develop his skills and ever since Harry had taken to cooking with regularity, whether breakfast, lunch or dinner didn't matter to him. He just wanted to be part of the household, and not a burden for his uncle to sustain his every need. Remus of course left him to his own devices saying it was never necessary to do these things since he would have to do them for himself anyway.

And so Harry had taken to being familiar in the kitchen or becoming 'a chef fit for kings' as Remus usually would say when eating his cooking. Harry had noticed that Remus usually found other things to do during the time when food would have to be prepared to get Harry in the kitchen, but in his eyes it was only another compliment to his skills.

Breakfast passed without incident and Harry started to get up until Remus decided to broach a subject which had been bothering him since he woke up from his nephew's screaming.

"Harry?" He started and motioned for him to stay sitting at the table while he himself got up and moved towards him.

"Happy eighth birthday, kid." Remus started rather apprehensively Harry noted while he hugged his uncle.

"There is something we have to discuss," Remus continued. "You know that I promised you that you could start your magical education when you turned eight but there is more to it than that. You are a Potter, which is an old pureblood family in the Wizarding World. It's not that the Potter men were or are pureblood fanatics; it's just that they found witches as their companion and as such stayed a pureblood family with its values and morals intact. You know when I explained that you're classified as a half-blood since your mother had non-magical parents?"

Harry nodded.

Remus continued, still apprehensively. "Well since you are a Potter, you have a choice regarding your wizarding education. I've always

let you search your own way through your studies and only involved myself in keeping you up to speed about the normal Muggle education you would receive in school. But now that we are reentering the Wizarding World, I could teach you as you should be educated as a Potter, a pureblood scion of an old family. When you reach 17, the age of majority in the Wizarding World, you are eligible to take up the title of 'Lord Potter', which is the head of the Potter family. Would you like that?"

Harry thought about it and always gave a lot value to his surname since it was another highly valued way to connect to his parents. Though he was given the option to take the name Lupin when his uncle adopted him, Remus was in full support of him keeping the Potter name saying it was a birthright that he should keep.

"What would such an education entail?" Harry replied.

"I'm not entirely sure about everything because I wasn't raised as a pureblood scion of the Lupin family since I was bitten at the age of 9, but I know of some things. The education usually starts when a child starts displaying accidental magic, when they recognize the child as an heir since they know he isn't a squib. Usually this happens at the age of 8 or 9. You were already displaying accidental magic before you were one year old and even if you didn't your parents recognized you as an heir a few days after you were born."

Remus took a deep breath before going on with his explanation.

"The education is part of the raising process of an heir to teach the child about the way he should walk, talk, eat and manage family affairs. He will learn wizarding customs such as fencing, dancing for wizarding balls and pureblood etiquette for their posture and dueling. He or she must usually learn to speak one or several languages and learn of their family history, who they are related to, which ancestors are to be proud of and which they should be ashamed of. They will be given an heir ring and will be given access to the family grimoire at the age of eleven after they are taught rudimentary Occlumency."

"Occlumency?" Harry enquired eager for more knowledge.

"Yes Occlumency. It is one of the mind arts. Occlumency is the art of protecting ones' mind from external penetration through the offending mind art 'Legilimency'. A wizard capable of this, or a

Legilimens if you will, can access ones memories and surface thoughts by looking into ones' eyes. Occlumency organizes the mind in a way where it will be easier to retain knowledge and keep your and your family's secrets under lock and key by placing one or several barriers around your mind with magic. Even though performing Legilimency on a minor is illegal, there are several well-known figures in the Wizarding World who use it discreetly on a regular basis. One of those known figures is headmaster Albus Dumbledore. It has been in practice for many centuries to teach ones' heir Occlumency to protect the secrets of a family." Remus finished with a slightly disapproving tone. He didn't want to set Harry against his old headmaster but he should know of the facts to be able to make his own opinion of the man.

"And you are capable of teaching me these things, even though you weren't raised to be an heir?" There was no doubt Harry's voice as he asked this, only mild curiosity as to how his uncle would have learned these things.

"Not all of them and there might be more to raising an heir of a pureblood family, but we'll think of something if you decide you want to learn these things," Remus replied.

"I think it would be best if I did," he started. "Even though I'm not sure that I want to take up the title of the head of the family, the education and etiquette required can only be a positive part in my own magical education." Harry answered with a thoughtful look on his face.

"Very well. I'll ask the manager of the bookstore in Diagon Alley and perhaps we might find something in Knockturn Alley today about pureblood customs and teachings. Though I'm not sure where in Knockturn we'll have to look," Remus said with plans forming in the back of his head.

Harry, recognizing the look on his uncle's face, decided to change the subject slightly and asked how they were going to get to Diagon Alley.

"We'll take the bus, it's not that far and parking in central London is impossible." Remus replied with a mysterious grin on his face.

After breakfast was cleared, they left their apartment in the south of London and walked towards the bus stop. As Harry was reaching the bench to sit down and wait for the bus, Remus motioned for him to keep standing and approach the curb next to the street.

"Are you ready to enter the Wizarding World kid?" Remus asked his nephew with glee, this would prove one of the things he could get over his charges' knowledge.

Harry, eager to match his uncle's enthusiasm, nodded energetically and was surprised when Remus took out his wand and raised it in the air.

"Bang!" The next second a triple-decker bus stood before him on the street and a young man stepped out with a card in front of his face from which he started to read. "Welcome to the Knight Bus, emergency transport for the stranded witch or wizard. Just stick out your wand, step on board, and we can take you anywhere you want to go. My name is Stan Shunpike, and I will be your conductor this evening." (1) Then he noticed his intended passengers, though Harry with still a slightly dazed look on his face. "Hello good sirs, where are you off to?"

Remus, seeing his charges state, decided to answer for them. "To the Leaky Cauldron please, Stan."

"Al'ight good sirs, that'll be eleven sickles each. For firteen you get 'ot chocolate, and for fifteen you get an 'ot-water bottle an' a tooofbrush in the colour of your choice." (1)

Remus paid the man just the one galleon and five sickles, knowing he had explained wizarding money to nephew so he wouldn't attract attention in his pureblood looks but without knowledge of wizarding money. The werewolf shook his charge out of his stupor and stepped on the bus.

Harry looked around and saw that there were no seats; instead, half a dozen brass bedsteads stood beside the curtained windows. Candles were burning in brackets beside each bed, illuminating the wood-panelled walls. There was no-one else in the bus on this level at least, which wasn't odd considering it was still around 8 in the morning. (1)

"You two have these," Stan said and pointed at the two beds behind the driver who was sitting on an armchair behind the steering wheel. "This is our driver, Ernie Prang. Take it away, Ern."

Ernie Prang, an elderly wizard wearing very thick glasses, nodded to Stan and stepped on the throttle. There was another tremendous bang, and the next moment Harry found himself flat on his bed, thrown backwards by the speed of the Knight bus. (1) He looked toward Remus and Stan for any signs of panic because of some malfunction and saw them looking back at him with signs of great enjoyment. He looked outside and saw that they were practically gliding through the streets and traffic in a neighbourhood unknown to Harry.

"How come the Muggles don't see us?" Harry asked.

"Them!" said Stan contemptuously. "Don' look properly, do they? Never notice nuffink, they don'." (1)

Harry was still looking out of the window, feeling increasingly nervous. Ernie didn't seem to have mastered the use of a steering wheel. The Knight Bus kept mounting the pavement, but it didn't hit anything; lines of lampposts, mailboxes, and trash cans jumped out of its way as it approached and back into position once it had passed. (1)

Ern slammed on the brakes and the Knight Bus skidded to a halt in front of a small and shabby-looking pub, the Leaky Cauldron.

"Thanks," Remus said to Ern and Stan and motioned for Harry to follow him into the pub. As they entered the tiny grubby-looking pub, Harry got the chance to look around before they moved on. There weren't many people in the pub, just some sleepy looking characters munching quietly on their breakfast and the old bartender, who was quite bald and looked like a toothless walnut. The customers in pub were rather nosy, because as soon as they had entered, people seemed to look up and check out who the new people were. Remus, eager to avoid unnecessary attention, nodded to the bartender and walked towards the back with a haughty stride, matching the expectations of the stereotypes they looked like. Harry tried to do the same, but had the feeling he failed miserably when he heard the bartender chuckle behind him. At the back of the bar they entered a small courtyard and Harry watched curiously as his uncle tapped the

wall three times with his wand in places Harry memorized immediately. He watched in wonder as the bricks quivered and a hole appeared which grew wider and wider, a second later they were facing an archway onto a cobbled street that twisted and turned out of sight. (2)

"Welcome," said Remus, "to Diagon Alley." (2)

He grinned at his nephews' amazement. They stepped through the archway. Harry looked quickly over his shoulder and saw the archway shrink instantly back into solid wall. (2)

There were shops, all along the street, the nearest one with a stack of cauldrons outside. A sign saying 'Cauldrons — All Sizes — Copper, Brass, Pewter, Silver — Self-Stirring — Collapsible' hanging outside the shop. (2)

Remus, noticing his charge looking at the cauldrons, answered the question that was probably on his lips.

"Potions Harry, cauldrons of different sorts are used for the creation of potions. We'll get one for you to practice at home but I'll probably have to ward a room in the apartment against accidents before you can start alright?"

Harry nodded, still speechless from the sights in the Alley. He wished he had about eight more eyes, the Alley was larger than he had expected and everything was even more amazing than the stories his uncle had told him. There weren't many people milling about which wasn't strange, considering the early hour. There was an apothecary which was next to the cauldron shop which he supposed were for ingredients and potions itself. A low, soft hooting came from a dark shop with a sign saying 'Eyelops Owl Emporium — Tawny, Screech, Barn, Brown, and Snowy'. Next to it was a window with broomsticks on display. There were so many shops, he didn't know if even he could memorize this before he went to Hogwarts! There were shops selling robes, telescopes together with silver instruments Harry had never seen before, windows stacked with barrels of bat spleens and eels' eyes, tottering piles of spell books, quills and rolls of parchment, potion bottles, globes of the moon... (2)

It was then that Harry had the idea to look how much more shops there were further down the street and saw it. It was assuredly the most imposing building of the alley. It was very large and towering over the little shops with snow white, polished walls and burnished bronze doors. Next to the door was a small but fierce looking creature that Harry had never seen before.

"Gringotts, Harry. And that is indeed a goblin you are staring so rudely at," Remus answered Harry's inquisitive look.

Harry looked towards the goblin and saw it scowling slightly in their direction. While he didn't know what to do, he supposed it was polite to just apologize for staring and hope the goblin wouldn't feel offended anymore. He walked toward the goblin and the goblin bowed to the potential customers of Gringotts.

Harry saw the goblin bow before him and imitated the goblin before saying;

"I apologize for staring at you, master goblin. I have heard of your species before but was momentarily surprised at the warrior-like look you have for a person involved in banking."

The goblin, stunned at the apology, the title given by this child and the unknown compliment given for the way he appeared to this wizard, replied simply without its usual sneer for a goblin;

"You're forgiven, young wizard. Welcome to Gringotts."

Remus, shocked out of his stupor of the unusually kind reply for a goblin by the word 'Gringotts', decided to get their business at the bank on the way and nodded towards the goblin while directing his nephew towards the entrance hall. Now they were facing a second pair of doors, silver this time, with words engraved upon them:

Enter, stranger, but take heed

Of what awaits the sin of greed,

For those who take, but do not earn,

Must pay most dearly in their turn.

So if you seek beneath our floors
A treasure that was never yours,
Thief, you have been warned, beware
Of finding more than treasure there. (2)

A pair of goblins bowed them through the silver doors and they moved into a vast marble hall. Harry looked around the bank, taking in the amazing sight of a goblin-run bank. It wasn't very busy since it was early but there were still about a hundred goblins sitting on high stools behind a long counter, scribbling in large ledgers, weighing coins in brass scales, examining precious stones through eyeglasses. There were too many doors to count leading out of the hall and Remus and Harry made for one counter which was slightly higher than the others.

"Good morning senior teller, my name is Remus Lupin and this is my charge Harry Potter. We would like to meet with the goblin manager of the Potter estate," Remus spoke quietly so as not to be overheard.

The goblin, startled to hear about the Potter estate, looked towards the man whose glamour was easily pierced and the young wizard whom he detected no glamour upon and spoke up. "You're aware Mr. Lupin that we have a description of Mr. Potter from his parents?"

Remus replied respectfully and honestly, "yes, I am. He is currently under a potion-induced disguise. We do not want to be recognized by the general population and let the word reach certain circles that Harry Potter is under my care. We are here to enquire about the state of the Potter fortune, to make a small withdrawal for shopping needs and to discuss certain things with the goblin manager of the Potter estate."

And so they were led by a small goblin who was ordered, in a strange language that Harry didn't recognize, to escort them. They followed through one of the doors in the back of the hall and along a wide corridor with doors on both sides, names engraved in the wood of the doors. They were shown entry to a door with 'Potter' upon the door after knocking by the goblin and the bark of 'Enter' from the office behind it.

The office was large and various weapons lined the walls on one side, from plain daggers to gem-encrusted swords. The other wall was lined with two cabinets, one with files and another with several items that Harry didn't recognize. A fierce looking goblin with an annoyed expression sat behind the office desk, though he was a bit taller than the senior teller in the hall, and his face was buried in files and reports with numbers on it.

Remus spoke up respectfully. "Good morning master goblin, my name is Remus Lupin and this is my charge Harry Potter. We are here to enquire about the Potter estate and some things you can hopefully assist us with."

The goblin looked up sharply when he heard the name 'Potter' and looked towards Harry with that same piercing expression that the senior teller gave him. When he didn't get any sort of reaction, he stood up and walked towards a cabinet where he got a piece of ancient looking parchment and a special kind of dagger that Remus instantly recognized. He placed the parchment and dagger before Harry and motioned with his hand towards the dagger while he finally spoke up.

"To prove you are who you say you are, place three drops of blood with the dagger onto the parchment. Your name will appear plus any vaults you are eligible to control."

Harry looked towards his uncle and saw his reassuring nod as a positive sign and did as he was told.

When the three drops of blood disappeared into the parchment, Harry saw his hand heal on his own. "Ritual dagger," Remus whispered in his ear. After the parchment was blank once again for a second, words started to write themselves as if someone invisible was writing them with a quill. As the words appeared, Remus moved back and motioned for Harry to stay where he was while he explained.

"This is private information Harry. Things such as this should stay in your family and though I adopted you in the Muggle world, I am not, nor will I ever be part of the Potter family."

Harry saw the resolve in his uncle's eyes and nodded silently. He looked at the parchment and saw the names he expected plus one more.

Harry James Potter – born July 31st 1980

Eligible for vaults:

Potter family vault (at 16 years old):

516,761 galleons, 14 sickles, 2 knuts

Various heirlooms; books, wands, jewellery, weapons and other memorabilia

Lily Evans vault:

23,412 galleons, 7 sickles, 21 knuts

Several items collected from the house in Godric's Hollow

Potter trust vault:

50,000 galleons (to be reset at this amount yearly from the family vault starting at the age of 11)

Gryffindor family vault (at 17 years old):

15,000 galleons (minimum amount required to be in the vault at the time of passing on the vault)

Several items (unknown due to security)

Eligible for inheritance of deeds:

Potter Manor

18 Ignotus street, Godric's Hollow

Eligible for inheritance of stocks:

15% Nimbus racing broom company

10% The Daily Prophet Newspaper

15% Wizarding Wireless Network

He was floored, he had expected that his parents had left him some money so he could pay for his education but he didn't expect this. He was rich! The goblin had been looking at the parchment also and hummed as if admitting he was wrong in thinking the wizard in front of him was not Harry Potter. He looked up, and started talking.

"Very well Mr. Potter, I am Sharptooth. I've been managing your holdings here at Gringotts, and I can safely say they've grown quite admirably. As for your deeds, both Potter Manor and the residence in Godric's Hollow have been abandoned since the attack on your parents. I would recommend you to hire an elf to maintain these properties." Remus nodded from the back when Harry looked towards him and the goblin continued. "Your stocks are doing fairly well, with a rise in income every now and then when Nimbus develops a new broom. Your only expenses are to the account of the Potter family vault for the current residence of your mother in St. Mungo's hospital. Now what can I help you with Mr. Potter?"

"First master goblin, please call me Harry. And could you explain to me why these names," here Harry pointed towards 'Potter family vault' and 'Gryffindor family vault', "have different age restrictions behind them?" Harry asked the goblin politely.

The goblin was momentarily surprised by the request to call this young wizard by his given name but recovered quickly to answer the question.

"The Potter family vault is the one of your father, Lord Potter. As such, you can normally enter this vault when you reach the age of majority as with the other vault. However since your father has perished, the title of head of the family comes to you, which is at the age of 16. You will automatically receive this title at that age and take up your family's seat in the Wizengamot or, should you desire so, appoint a representative in your place."

"The Wizengamot is the wizarding house of parliament, correct?" The goblin nodded. "Who controls that seat now?" Harry asked with a tone of disapproval he got when one abused power.

The goblin, recognizing that his client's ire was not directed at him, answered after checking the ledger in front of him.

"That would be your current magical guardian, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore. He currently holds the key to your trust vault and thus is in control of the finances you can access, which is, according to him, only the Potter trust vault."

"Did he ever withdraw money from this vault? And why not my mothers vault," Harry asked as politely as possible, trying to hold his ire in the back of his mind.

"He did not and since your mother is still alive, he cannot access this vault since it is not a part of your magical guardianship. However, when your parents announced you as their heir here at Gringotts, they gave you access to this vault. The key to this vault has been in our custody since the attack, recalled from the residence in Godric's Hollow in case your mother is cured." The goblin replied and slid the key across the desk.

Harry picked up the key and inspected it, while asking something he suspected already. "I assume my monthly statements are being sent to headmaster Dumbledore, where my trust vault key resides?" The goblin nodded, so Harry continued. "And if I were to request this key be recalled, he would know of my presence here at Gringotts?" Sharptooth nodded once again.

"Okay, then I have a question," Harry started as he passed the parchment to the goblin and motioned for Remus to return next to him so they could discuss the next subject. "I am currently 8 years old and starting my magical education as of today. My 'uncle'", here he waved his hand towards Remus, "has asked me if I wanted to be raised like the son of a pureblood family that I am and I agreed. I wish to become worthy of the title of 'Lord' and will devote my life to that goal. It is my goal to learn as much magic as I can to hopefully one day cure my mother. What I hope to gain from you, master goblin Sharptooth, is any book you can give about the goblin species and the language you speak, for a fee of course, and together with any advice you can give me regarding my education."

Both the goblin and Remus looked up at Harry startled at the request for my advice. "You request my advice, why if I may ask?"

The goblin spoke in harsh tone that Remus didn't like one bit, but he knew his nephew and decided to remain quiet.

Harry heard the tone of the goblin and decided to ask forgiveness. "I apologize if I offended you, but considering the fact that your species is in charge of wizarding finances, you must be knowledgeable. You and your fellow goblins deal with Lords and Ladies regularly and therefore will have an idea of what such an education might entail. Therefore, your advice will hold reasoning behind it that we might not have and will be worth a lot to me. I do not know much of your species and strive for knowledge which is why I enquired about any books you consider informative about your species."

The goblin thought about his client's answer and considered the unusual amount of respect this wizard showed him. He treated others like an equal and demanded the same in return. The goblin decided to give in to his request and pulled a book out of his cabinet. He spoke directly towards Harry;

"As advice, I can only give you a list of books which will help in your education towards becoming a noble Lord. However, this book," he held up the beautiful, leather covered book with no wear or tear visible, "describes the language of the goblins and goblin etiquette such as formal greetings, dealing with different rankings within the goblin nation and the history of our species from our perspective. It is impossible to learn our entire language from a book, however over time and through dealing with goblins, it is possible to learn it through the passing of tongue. Should you desire it, you may borrow this book for a fee of 500 galleons for the time period of one year."

"Done," Harry replied before Remus could start his protests that he saw were coming.

"Very well. Do not damage it, for you will find yourself 'persona non grata' in the goblin nation if you do." The goblin told him in a warning tone.

"I won't, you have my word," Harry replied and stood up to offer the goblin his hand.

"You have much to learn from that book, young wizard. A goblin in the corridor will escort you towards the vault you hold the key of. I

assume you wish this visit to remain a secret from your magical guardian?" Harry nodded gratefully. "Very well, I will have that list ready for you in the hall when you return from your visit to the vault." The goblin replied as his clients moved out of his office.

Their visit to the vault happened without incident. Only Remus' uncomfortable look as they filled up a bag each with galleons. Harry only said that Remus worked for their living in the Muggle world and since it was available, they might as well use the money from this vault to pay for their things in the Wizarding World. The items collected from Godric's Hollow were largely left alone, except for a small album with photos of Harry's parents that Remus recognized, picked up and handed to Harry without saying anything. After looking at the first page with a photo of his parents on their wedding day, Harry kept the album close to himself the whole day.

As they left the bank with the list and bags of gold, Harry turned towards Remus with an eager expression. Remus, recognizing the look on the definitely future Ravenclaw, just pointed towards Flourish & Blotts. Harry looked to where his uncle was pointing and was already on his way before Remus could look back towards his charge. He laughed all the way towards the shop and followed him in after looking around for familiar faces.

It was still relatively quiet in the bookstore even though it was already 10am. Remus decided to check the time they spent in the bookstore, knowing his charge wouldn't make it in just a couple of hours. He himself went looking for books about raising a pureblood heir while Harry would start looking over each of the categories to start his magical education.

Harry was in heaven. This was the first magical bookstore he was in but it was everything he ever dreamed of. The store was categorically divided in the different subjects of magic; there was even an entire section of magical novels and other fictional books. He walked through the store once to form a plan of attack before starting with the 'Magic in general' section. Here he found 'Magical Theory' by Albert Waffling, a strange looking book called 'The Legend of Magic' and a fairytale book called 'The Tales of Beedle the Bard' by Beedle the Bard which he thought would be interesting. A small part of the magic in general section contained several autobiographies of famous witches and wizards which Harry had no interest in except to pick up 'Great wizards of the twentieth century'.

The section next to that part, which was the last section before entering the 'educational Hogwarts categories', had books such as 'Practical Household magic', 'Important Modern Magical Discoveries', 'A Study of Recent Developments in Wizardry'(all of which he picked up out of curiosity) and various cookbooks which Harry didn't glance at for more than a second.

When he entered the educational section for the second time to select his books, he started with 'An Appraisal of Magical Education in Europe' and 'Hogwarts, A History' by Chroniculus Punnet. After that, he went on to the History section where he picked up as much as he could find that was interesting; reasoning he probably had a lot to catch up with. The titles included 'Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century', 'A History of Magic' by Bathilda Bagshot which was filled with goblin rebellions, 'Modern Magical History', 'The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts' and 'Notable Magical Names of Our Time' which was slightly more modern than 'Great wizards of the twentieth century'. He decided to limit the books on wand-based subjects to first-year books only for now and asked for the list at the counter. Checking to see if he missed any books for history (which he didn't), he picked up 'The Standard Book of Spells, grade 1' by Miranda Goshawk for Charms, 'A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration' by Emeric Switch for Transfiguration and 'Practical Defense for the Young Witch and Wizard' together with 'Defensive Magical Theory' by Wilbert Slinkhard for Defense Against the Dark Arts. Staying on subject he checked to see if there were books on the Dark Arts, but there weren't any at all. He considered that they might have to look for them in Knockturn Alley. He did pick up 'Basic Hexes for the Busy and Vexed' and 'Jinxes for the jinxed' along the way to the next section though.

That only left the non wand-based subjects Herbology, Care Of Magical Creatures, Ancient Runes, Arithmancy, Astronomy and Potions. He decided to leave Potions for last, since it was the subject he was looking forward to most, considering it was the only subject of magic he could practice at this time.

The Herbology section added 'Goshawk's Guide to Herbology', 'One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi' by Phyllida Spore and 'Magical Water Plants of the Mediterranean' to the basket. Arithmancy only added 'Numerology and Grammatica' and 'New Theory of Numerology' which was the advanced version of the former beginners guide to Arithmancy.

Ancient Runes was something Harry didn't know anything about. He had read in the Muggle Egyptian history books that the Egyptians described historical events in this script, but never was anything mentioned about magic or sorcery as they called it then. But after reading the introduction to 'Ancient Runes Made Easy', he realized that it could be an underestimated subject of enormously powerful magic. He added that book to his growing collection together with 'Magical Hieroglyphs and Logograms' and 'Spellman's Syllabary' but decided to leave the advanced books, since the introduction he had just read warned excessively against uninformed experimenting.

Astronomy, he quickly realized was much more advanced in the Muggle world and Harry decided to check out the telescopes later to see if it was the same for those. He only picked up 'Unfogging the future' by Cassandra Vablatsky for Divination as he passed it because he didn't have much faith in the subject. He promised himself though, that he would read it properly and not be prejudiced in any way. He saw the 'Magical Creatures' section was filled with books of specialization on different kinds of animals/beasts he had never heard of, so he picked up 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' by Newt Scamander as an introduction to this subject. He would come back later for the specific animal/beast books if he was interested, he reasoned to himself and continued on to the next subject.

"Potions", he moaned disappointed as he stood in front of three different books for the section. It wasn't a cleaned out section, there just wasn't any more. Only 'Magical Drafts and Potions' by Arsenius Jigger, 'Advanced Potion-Making' by Libatius Borage and 'Alchemy, Ancient Art and Science' by Argo Pyrites was visible on display. He added those quickly and walked towards the counter. The man behind the counter saw one of those long-time customers approach in the form of a roughly ten-year-old kid, a basket filled with piles of books and a non-matching disappointed look on his face.

"Excuse me sir," Harry started in his most polite tone that didn't fool the man for a second.

"Yes?" The man answered in a tone that told Harry he wasn't buying the innocent child look he was going for.

"Do you have any other potion books?" Harry asked, completely stopping the extreme polite tone since it wasn't working anyway.

The man behind the counter, recognizing that this was just a kid with an eagerness to learn, decided to explain the problem as it was.

"No, there are specialized potion books about for instance Healing potions but general potion books are hard to come by. Small improvements are discovered continuously and there are not many books published with the changes since it only adds to the known results given in the books already. For more information about the newest potions and improvements, the Potions Guild publishes a magazine, 'Potions Monthly', which contains other things as well such as every apprentice taken on that month, who has their potion masteries completed and the yearly 'top potions master' list."

"Okay," Harry replied disenchanted. "Thank you for your help."

He left his basket next to the counter since he was almost finished anyway. He walked around the store one more time, picked up 'Quidditch Through the Ages' by Kennilworthy Whisp and 'A Vampire's Monologue' by Amarillo Lestoat and 'A Healers Guide for Beginners' but didn't see anything else that caught his attention.

Remus encountered Harry a few times in the store but was finished much more quickly and told his charge he'd pick him up here later in the early afternoon. All Remus found in the store was 'Nature's Nobility: A Wizarding Genealogy' which contained pages full of family trees with family names lost in the male line; 'Wizarding customs throughout Britain' which described important dates in the year such as the annual ministries' Christmas ball, Samhain and Halloween to name a few and 'Common Magical Ailments and Afflictions' which described pretty much everything that could happen in the raising process of a magical child.

As Harry returned to the counter from his last trip through the store, he saw Remus waiting there with a young but fairly strong looking and restless snowy white owl in a cage. His uncle signalled they would talk outside and left the store with the restless owl, waiting outside for Harry to ring up his new library of books. He asked the man behind the counter politely to shrink them, as Remus told him they wouldn't need to bring a bag because of this option.

Harry exited and immediately kneeled before the beautiful owl, asking; "And who is this then?"

"I don't know, but since you're starting your education I thought it a good idea to have an owl for letters and owl ordering at home. I haven't named her yet, but I thought you might want to have her as a birthday present," Remus replied slightly apprehensive for his nephew's approval.

"Sure, thank you. But she's an energetic one; we'll have to think of a fitting name." He turned towards the owl, "how about 'Katie'?" The owl seemed to take on a thoughtful look to the astonishment of Remus before screeching negatively. "No it might be a bit common, I agree. Okay, a more reverent one then. What about 'Hedwig'? I found the name in 'A History of Magic' and it was a famous witch who did something...."

The owl was silent for a few seconds before cooing and lovingly nipping the fingers of its new master through the bars of the cage.

"Unbelievable," Remus muttered under his breath.

"Okay Hedwig, I'm assuming you don't like to stay in this cage?" The owl seemed to shake its head and Harry immediately opened the cage without regard to Remus' protests. The owl jumped out of the cage, took a small flight in a circle, before landing incredibly gently on Harry's left shoulder and softly nipping thankful on his ear.

Harry shook his head towards Remus and muttered "no faith" under his breath before turning to his new owl. "Okay girl, we're going to have lunch and shop around for the afternoon, before taking you home in the cage for one time so you know where we live. If you want, you can look around the alley and I'll signal you down when we leave, is that okay?"

The owl nodded, took flight and landed on the rooftop of one of the shops, watching and following her new master with her eyes intently. Remus just shook his head and motioned for Harry to follow him back towards the Leaky Cauldron where they had a bacon sandwich and soup for lunch.

They returned to the Alley at two in the afternoon, where Harry immediately raised his arm in the air. After a few seconds, Hedwig

landed on his arm and was fed a few pieces of bacon before returning to her lookout on the rooftop.

Their shopping continued after that without much incident. At Slug & Jiggers Apothecary, a smelly shop that made up for it by having all kinds of interesting ingredients to Harry, they picked up the beginner, intermediate and advanced potion kit and a Potions Monthly magazine. They bought a pewter cauldron set with different sizes at the cauldron shop though none were too expensive like the ones made from gold. Harry reasoned they would probably only be necessary with certain potions or ingredients. As Harry suspected, the telescopes were severely outdated and he decided to pick one up in the Muggle world. Remus insisted they pick up a few quills, ink and parchment for Harry, saying he needed to get used to it for his pureblood education.

It was only when they went to the magical menagerie to buy owl treats for Hedwig that something unexpected happened. Harry, curious about what kind of pets wizards kept, walked through the shop all the way towards the back where he saw the most interesting kind. He had already encountered a weird type of cat, 'kneazle' the sign read, mice, rats, toads, normal cats, a weird type of worms, and beetles. But in the back was the reptile section, with all kinds of snakes, both Muggle and magical he realized. He even saw a snake with three heads that were arguing with each other and seemed not to notice that Harry had approached.

"Hello," he hissed silently so as not to interrupt rudely and be impolite.

"A speaker," the three heads hissed at once with reverence.

"You mean I can understand you. Indeed I can, isn't that a common trait amongst my kind?" Harry asked inquisitively.

"No, most of us never meet a speaker, I've never even heard of one of my kind to meet a speaker." The middle snake he hissed proudly.

"Well, my name is Harry. It's nice to meet you." He hissed back and was suddenly grabbed from behind and pulled by his uncle out of the shop.

"Remus, what..." He started to ask but was interrupted before he could finish.

"You're a parselmouth, you can speak to snakes," he started to explain. "I have no idea how you came to have this ability but there is something you should know about it. The evil wizard named Voldemort, whose followers attacked your parents, was a parselmouth also. For centuries the language of parseltongue, the language of snakes, has been seen as the sign of a dark wizard. You should keep this ability a secret, for people fear it and fear the people who have that ability. It's another prejudice of course but one that can have too many undesired consequences." All the while explaining this, Remus spoke in soft hushed tones to avoid being overheard in the now busy alley.

They continued through the Alley, briefly checking the window of the shop which sold broomsticks, for it had many children admiring the newest broom available: The Nimbus 1700, a broom which had improved the newest Comets' top speed by 8 miles per hour. They also stepped into Madam Malkin's robes for all occasions to get a robe for remaining inconspicuous when they visited Knockturn. Remus suggested to maybe get a few different kinds of robes for his education, but Harry denied saying he didn't like the fabrics. They had everything that they could have gotten from Diagon Alley and decided to head for Knockturn before returning home.

(1) Scenes (partly) taken from 'Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban', they are not all mine.

(2) Scenes (partly) taken from 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher stone', they are not all mine.

Titles of books are largely selected from the Harry Potter books itself.

Knockturn Alley

Knockturn Alley was everything Harry expected it to be. The alley was quiet, shaded and filled with rundown and faded shop fronts. As soon as he entered the side alley from Diagon, he had the feeling of returning home, or a feeling of being at a place more comfortable than where you came from at least. Diagon Alley was a shopping street filled with colours, signs displaying their merchandise and a small feeling in the back of your head of it being controlled, or at least influenced.

Knockturn Alley didn't have that. When Remus talked about Knockturn Alley, Harry immediately recognized some prejudice in his voice and the way he talked. So Harry questioned that if it was prejudice, that disapproval for an entire shopping street, then what could the real story of the street entail. He reasoned that Knockturn must be an alley outside of that control, outside of being influenced by what a shopping street should look like. He was right.

Most of the stores didn't have any sort of sign saying what they were selling or which service they provided but if you looked closely enough, you could always get some feeling of its nature.

Remus had already decided to keep his wand in his hand, just in case but Harry signaled that he should put it away.

"Put it back in your sleeve, you're making us stand out, remember the way you look. Pretend to be at home here and I have a feeling we won't be bothered by anything that means us harm," He hissed to his uncle.

Remus, recognizing the words of wisdom from his eight year old nephew, put his wand back in its holster and decided to let his charge take the lead on this one. He seemed to be feeling almost at home here, which was more than he himself could say. They entered the first shop on the left out of curiosity which had a small display case outside with all kinds of eyes in them that Harry found very interesting.

As soon they closed the door and looked around, their jaws fell to the ground. The inside of the store could only be described as some kind of optician for wizards, for several more shelves with eyes lined one wall and strange looking tools that could be used to remove

eyes were hung on the opposite. The back wall, behind the counter was filled with strange looking glasses, eye patches and other eye instruments. A man appeared from behind the curtain looking expectantly towards the pair as if he heard them come in from the back, though there was no bell of any kind.

"Good afternoon, how may I help you?" The man said from behind the counter.

"Hello," Harry started nervously in his child's voice. "We were wondering if you were an optician and could help me with my bad eyesight."

The man, an old pureblood by the looks of it, looked towards Harry and motioned him closer. "You, bad eyesight? You can see me clear as day right now and you're not wearing glasses," he scoffed.

"No sir, I'm not," Harry started. "I'm wearing Muggle contact lenses which do the same as glasses, only they are placed directly on the eye."

The man thought about it, then changed his attitude from disbelieving to eager in a matter of seconds. "Really, those Muggles always think of interesting things. Can you show them to me? I'll buy them from you if you explain the workings to me; I'll even correct your eyesight for free!"

"Correct my eyesight? And why do you want to buy them," Harry asked.

"I'll need those contact lenses to see if I can charm them of course. And as for your eyesight correction, it only takes a curse directly to each of your eyes which the ministry doesn't approve of. It usually costs you 12 galleons, but if I can make something of those lenses you talk about; I can create a whole new business line of eyewear for protection and earn more than a hundred times that amount." The man replied, eager to get started with his new idea.

"What kind of charms?" Harry asked, matching the opticians' state though for new information about the magical world, not business.

"Whatever you want of course! I've got glasses with Water Repellent spells on them, aura sight which can help you see through invisibility

cloaks and Disillusionment Charms, Anti-Summoning Charms on it and of course the ever-correcting eyesight."

Harry thought about it for a while and came to a conclusion. The concept of Muggle contact lenses was worth a lot to this guy and he needed Harry's assistance for without it, he wouldn't know where to look for a Muggle optician. He came up with an idea for a deal and suggested it.

"I'll tell you what, I'll give you the lenses I'm currently wearing, explain the concept of its design and I'll give you my own supply of lenses with the address of an optician in the Muggle world where you could buy more of them. In return, you'll correct my eyesight for free and you'll give me one pair of neutral lenses with all the charms on them you just mentioned. Do we have a deal?" He finished with a hand stretched out.

The man, knowing the potential value of it quickly agreed and Harry took out his lenses and got his eyes painfully, 'I told you it was a curse', corrected. After a half hour of waiting for his eyesight to return; he explained the concept of different focal points, the fact that soft lenses were monthly lenses and to be taken out each night. The man scoffed and said a dirt-repellent charm and an unbreakable charm should do the trick. Harry had nothing to say to that, so he just left the address behind, and told him he would send his supply of lenses by owl post with a snowy white owl. The optician replied he would send Harry's own contacts back the same way and Harry went on his way with his uncle trailing dazedly behind him.

The next shop was on the same side of the street and looked promising for there was a mannequin wearing finely tailored robes behind the window. Remus followed his charge into the shop, surprised that Harry would voluntarily enter a wizarding clothing store, since he left Madam Malkin's as soon as he possibly could. He entered the store and immediately knew that this was a more suitable shop for his nephew than Madam Malkin's. The racks and shelves were lined with tailored robes of all sorts and in all kinds of materials, dress shirts, slacks in all colours and boots made out of finely made dragon hide and other such materials. Remus looked towards his nephew, saw the gleam in his eyes and shook his head. Ever since he had adopted Harry and insisted they burn the castoffs of his cousin, his nephew had developed a taste for having clothes that fit properly and looked proper. He had even developed a

reasonable sense of fashion that most men seemed to lack in the years that he overcame his malnourishment growth failure. As such, a clothing store that had this kind of impression on his nephew would be visited for years to come. An enthusiastic girl that probably worked in the store was already walking off with Harry through the racks and pointing at several things while combining others for Harry to try out.....

When Harry was finally fully clothed once more, he had a large package as a result being shrunk by the owner Isolde behind the counter. The girl, who helped him select his clothes, kept on talking about Knockturn Alley since Harry had asked for directions. Alice, as she introduced herself, was sixteen years of age and worked in the shop during the summer to make some extra money. She had been a life-saver with the directions and the two started an instant friendship over their shared fashion sense. She explained which shops were open at this time of day, where to find them and which were only opened at night. Harry and Remus came to the fortunate conclusion that they wouldn't need to return at night and continued on with their shopping trip after thanking Alice for her help.

They had to walk a bit for their next stop and passed an empty building ('It was an illegal rare magical creature smuggler which was raided by the ministry a few years ago, they cleared everything out and it's been empty for a while now'), Borgin and Burkes ('You're still a bit too young to go in there'), the weapon smith which had no name (It doesn't, I'm telling you') and Collunder's Magical Armory which was from a cousin of Isolde's, until they came upon their destination. The building was even dirtier on the outside than the optician but Alice had assured them that Coultiers' Apothecary was owned by an importer from France who only dealt with the finest items. Remus and Harry wanted to check out this store because of their desire to one day brew the Wolfsbane Potion. They knew the potion was a relatively recent development and doubted it would be in any normal potion books. Remus had only heard of it when he started working at the primary school fulltime and hadn't found it in his nephews' books when waiting for his charge in Isolde's.

They entered the apothecary and were surprised at the lack of smell in the store. It was sparkling clean everywhere, every ingredient was in clean jars and they were all labeled with their names, date of shelving and price. There were vials filled with different kinds of potions along the wall with sign above it; 'You break it, you buy it!' It

also had a rare ingredient section which they hadn't seen in the apothecary in Diagon but Harry didn't recognize the names anyway, so he supposed he should read his books first and ask questions later. They walked up to the counter where a man with greasy blond hair was waiting for them and Remus asked for a potions book with the Wolfsbane Potion preparation manner. The man, 'Frederick Coultiers' as he introduced himself, moved from behind the counter and walked to a shelf with leaflets, magazines and a few books and picked out a book on healing potions and a small magazine. It was the Potions monthly magazine from a few years ago when the potion was invented and published. Harry of course selected the book, since it would provide extra reading material for his education which he would be able to practice at home. They paid Frederick and thanked him, saying they would probably return here for ingredients instead of that smelly shop in Diagon Alley and left for their next stop.

They skipped quickly past the brothel where a few women were waiting outside and entered the elf dealership. Here they quickly selected a relatively young female elf named 'Blinky' who was delighted to finally have a family to work for. She bonded to Harry since she would be maintaining Potter Manor and cleaning up the house in Godric's Hollow. She quickly popped away, squealing "So much work to do!" with glee and also muttered something about a 'suitable welcome home dinner for her new master'.

They exited the dealership and walked past the trunk store ('A suitable Trunk for a pureblood heir has at least three compartments, which we'll get here when you go to Hogwarts', Remus replied when he saw his nephew looking), then Popovich' Wand Store ('He was an apprentice under Gregorovich', Isolde told them when Alice mentioned it) and continued towards their final destination, the Knockturn Alley bookstore.

Harry immediately realized that this store was completely different from Flourish & Blotts in Diagon. There, the books were sorted by category and stacked with a number of copies behind them for multiple customers. Here in 'Katern', which the store was called, the books were lined up in shelves, just like in a library. The difference with a library however, was the fact that there was no visible filing system and all books of all subjects were just placed amongst each other. Though this was an inconvenience, it was not an obstruction since Harry would just check shelf by shelf.

Remus, recognizing the dilemma started on the opposite side as his nephew and read the titles on the spine after nodding briefly to the owner who just walked in. The owner, seeing his customers would be a while before they required assistance, returned towards the back room without saying a word.

Harry collected several books without regard to subject, he just grabbed what seemed interesting and kept walking, not really reading every title but more browsing the shelves for things standing out. He picked up 'Charmed, Defensive and Transfigured secrets' by U. N. Ravel, which was a theoretical book explaining the facts necessary to display talent in those subjects; 'Moste Potente Potions' was a much needed addition to Harry's potion books since it described the more useful potions; 'Magick Moste Evile' since it described cursed items; 'The Dark Arts: An Exploration' was the only Dark Arts books he selected, since the rest felt 'not right'; 'A Compendium of Common Curses and Their Counter-Actions' and 'The Dark Arts Outsmarted' were the only defense books he selected.

From the other subjects at Hogwarts Harry found nothing interesting for now and he decided to check out the books he already had of those subjects first. If necessary, he would return here to ask about any books that would be informative additions to the ones he already had. He did find some other very interesting books though, such as 'Parselmouth abilities explored' by Gabriel Slytherin and 'Parseltongue curses', both of which Remus couldn't read. Also 'Enchanting Enchantments' and 'The underestimated art of animation' were amongst the growing collection. He finished his shopping and paid at the counter, noting that the total price for these books was a lot higher than at Flourish & Blotts, even though there were at most half as many books.

His uncle, waiting for him by the exit since he had already finished up, showed him his purchases. It seems this store had a lot on purebloods and the raising of an heir considering his pile was larger than Harry's. He read 'Pureblood Customs', 'The Mind Arts: Occlumency', 'The Mind Arts: Legilimency', 'Hereditary Responsibilities' and 'Lordship in the Wizengamot' among the pile of books but there were too many to glance at. Remus shrunk their purchases for them and they left the store, thanking the man for his patience and saying they would probably be back.

They walked towards the Leaky Cauldron silently and slowly, to avoid attracting too much attention in Knockturn and just taking in the sights. Already it was becoming more active in the Alley even though it was just after five and still full light outside since it was summer. They motioned Hedwig down once they reached Diagon Alley and after a bit of coaching managed to get her into the cage. They took a taxi on the way home and were pleasantly surprised to find that Blinky had cooked them dinner. After some light orders they managed to get Blinky to eat with them at the table. The food was delicious and Remus and Harry made sure that Blinky knew it. Remus enlarged their packages after dinner and a still-blushing-red Blinky placed them in their rooms without being told. Tomorrow would be another day in the Muggle world, but Harry would finally be able to read about the magical world.

Harry's Education

Over the next three years, Harry would be educated as a pureblood heir to the Potter family.

He started this with reading every history book they had bought and asked Remus all the questions he could come up with. Remus tried his best answering everything to his charges' satisfaction, but it was more than once that just he didn't know the answer.

Harry read about the war with Voldemort, or You-Know-Who as he was described in the 'The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts' and the way Neville Longbottom was portrayed as the Boy-Who-Lived after that Halloween night in 1981. He wanted to know all about the Killing Curse and the way it exactly worked, to have more information about how the Longbottom boy might have survived. Harry doubted the boy would be anything much, since he was only a baby when it happened but if 'Modern Magical History' was to be believed; Neville Longbottom was the new Merlin.

Harry also read about World War II from a different perspective than the Muggle history books and the way Adolf Hitler was aided by the Dark Lord Grindelwald and his 'Knights of Walpurgis'. Albus Dumbledore was mentioned several times in the books 'Great wizards of the twentieth century' and 'Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century' as the defeater of the Dark Lord Grindelwald and the only one You-Know-Who supposedly feared. Harry asked Remus if Albus Dumbledore knew Voldemort from before he turned evil since he started as a Transfiguration teacher at Hogwarts after his discovery of the 'Twelve uses of dragon's blood'. Remus was baffled for not realizing this sooner and told Harry that if Voldemort did in fact go to Hogwarts, then Dumbledore would have known him.

Harry also read 'Important Modern Magical Discoveries' and 'A Study of Recent Developments in Wizardry', but aside from recognizing some of the names from 'Notable Magical Names of Our Time', Harry didn't understand much of it so it didn't mean much except for committing the facts to memory. For example; while he didn't know what 'Moon Thistle' was, he did know that the harvest of the flowers of that plant during the full moon was a newly discovered, very potent ingredient of the Wolfsbane Potion.

It wasn't long after reading everything that Harry realized headmaster Albus Dumbledore was revered for his defeat of Grindelwald and his opposition of Voldemort and thus could do no wrong in the eyes of the wizarding world. It was in his opinion a mistake to have one man hold several positions of power, such as the headmaster of Hogwarts, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and the Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards. He had read about several instances in his history books where the saying 'Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely' was applied in retrospect and this seemed such an instance just waiting to happen. When he voiced his opinion to his uncle, he simply replied "I agree" and didn't elaborate any further.

For his education on pureblood etiquette, Remus applied Harry for dancing and fencing lessons in the Muggle world. Over the next three years before his eleventh birthday, Harry would learn to dance the several categories of dancing styles. He started out with just ballroom dancing, since it would teach him the dances he would be required to know for traditional wizarding balls. But he quickly got the hang of the Waltz, the Tango, the Foxtrot and the Quickstep after a year and a half so he decided to add two styles of dancing. He joined Latin and Historical dance with his course schedule and added the Jive, the Samba, the Rumba and the Cha-cha-cha to his repertoire. His last six months of dancing lessons before he went to Hogwarts consisted of perfecting his repertoire, adding minor alterations for Historical dance lessons and improvisation by combining certain dances.

Remus tried several times to get Harry to slow down on his lessons, saying he had at least until his sixteenth birthday to complete these lessons but Harry wouldn't budge. He wanted to complete these lessons before his eleventh birthday, which he did, so he could focus on learning as much magic as possible when he went to Hogwarts. Also, his fencing teacher kept praising Harry on his balance because of his skill in dancing.

Fencing was a hard skill to master, especially since he was still very young but his determination to become worthy of the title of Lord kept Harry going. He had accepted the fact that to keep improving, he would have to keep practicing and thus Remus was enlisted to help Harry with his practice. Remus was no expert, but he could easily hold his own against Harry with his werewolf reflexes and thus would be a satisfactory sparring partner for now.

During the three years towards his eleventh birthday, Remus would teach Harry Muggle and pureblood etiquette with some small tips and a few innocuous reprimands. He would lecture every once in a while about things such as 'table manners', 'social norms' and 'letter-writing etiquette'. But the actual etiquette was taught through trial-and-error, like posture, style of address and the art of diplomacy.

Harry continued with his Muggle education and would almost be able to finish secondary school on his own at eleven years old. He didn't complete his own Muggle studies because his magical education and pureblood teachings were taking up most of his time. Primary school lesson periods were spent reading from the books of secondary school but he would almost completely ignore those books at home. He completed English, Mathematics, History and Science with ease at A-level; his Citizenship, Geography and Information & Communication Technology at GCSE-level but skipped the other subjects of secondary school mainly since he had no use for them. Sex education was covered in the innuendo of Remus' stories of old, he got enough physical education out of his pureblood teachings and Modern Foreign Languages covered not enough of a language to learn how to speak it fluently.

His pureblood teachings however consisted of the learning of at least one foreign language. And so Remus hired, at Harry's request, two separate tutors for teaching him French and German. His reasoning for two separate teachers was that no adult would consider teaching a nine-year-old (at that time) child two different foreign languages at the same time. Remus added Latin to his inventory and taught it to Harry perfectly himself, so he could put the emphasis on magical incantations. And while Harry didn't finish his language education before going to Hogwarts, he was fluent in French and well on his way in German by the time he reached eleven.

For the next three years, Harry's readings of the three main wand-based magical subjects consisted only of the books he had bought the first time in Diagon and Knockturn Alley. The books Harry had gotten for wand-based subjects only covered the material for first-year practical instructions although the theory books were a much more interesting read for him at that time. For instance his transfiguration first-year book 'A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration'

versus his theory book 'Charmed, Defensive and Transfigured secrets':

'Transfiguration is the art of turning one object into another. When transfiguring something, one must focus on the wand movements and the incantation spoken to obtain the necessary changes in the object. Transfiguration requires concentration and skill and thus is seen as one of the most difficult subjects of magic. This book guides you to develop your skill by transfiguring different things out of various base objects and prepares you for intermediate transfiguration.'

This was mentioned in the introduction of the standard first-year book of transfiguration. After that introduction, the book started to list the assignments starting with transfiguring a match into a needle. Its wand movement and the incantation 'Compositus Verto' were the only things displayed in the book for the assignment. The theory book however that Harry picked up in 'Katern' went further in depth and described the transfiguration in detail. This assignment was merely a way to give an example of the 'secret of transfiguration' applied to 'inanimate-to-inanimate transfigurations':

'Transfiguration is described as one of the most difficult subjects of magic. The art of turning one object into another is not just in the wand movements and incantations, but it is also in the visualization process during these feats of magic that make the change work. Ordinary books on this subject only mention wand movements and incantations, because it causes the person performing the magic to focus on the object and desired result. This focus is the visualization mentioned before, which is the most important part of the transfiguration.

For example, when trying inanimate-to-inanimate transfiguration by trying to transfigure a match into a needle, it is important to visualize the change. You need to think of the wood changing into metal, the match head changing into the needle eye and the other end of the match turning pointy. When performing a partial transfiguration in this example, it is obvious that you're not visualizing that part of the change. When you successfully accomplish this assignment, it is only practicing your visualization and learning the wand movements and incantations by hard for this type of transfiguration.'

Part of the book was merely a summary of the subject 'Transfiguration' but it detailed nearly every type of transfiguration Harry imagined they would learn in seven years at Hogwarts. That didn't mean he would stop reading the first-year book though, since he didn't want to miss out on any given assignments. He spent some time learning every assignment by heart and practicing the wand movements with a stick, which is what his uncle advised him to do for these subjects.

'Charms' was mentioned in the book as well, but Harry decided to start with his first-year charms book, 'The Standard Book of Spells, grade 1'. The first-year book started with an explanation on what charms exactly were and an abbreviated form of the table of contents. It was fairly straightforward and the charms themselves were listed like in the first-year transfiguration book with only the wand movements and incantations.

'Charms is a subject of magic that teaches several spells to facilitate magical people throughout their daily lives. It is a way in which magic is guided or 'charmed' to have the necessary effect required by the caster. It's a form of magic that is ever-growing for when the magical community needs something; charms are invented to make it happen. The subject is nearly endless in its possibilities and this book will teach you a repertoire of spells that you will have uses for during your magical lives.'

After the introduction, the standard book of spells started with simple charms such as the shrinking spell ('reducio'), a spell to make plants grow faster ('herbivivus'), a spell to fix things ('reparo') and others. All charms mentioned were specifically designed for one thing, like the introduction stated and the subject seemed fairly straightforward. Harry decided immediately to check out the other book for the so-called 'secret of charms'.

'Charms is a subject of magic that basically denotes every spell for some desirable outcome. While this is an extremely vague and unhelpful explanation, it also contains the 'secret to charms'. A charm is a spell where the magic is 'charmed' to manage something. Whether it is used to levitate something, repair something, enlarge something or create a fire, charms are desirable outcomes made by magic. Some parts of charms are styled with different names, like hexes, jinxes, curses or even Defense Against the Dark Arts. The entire subject is mainly a part of charms with the desirable outcome

to protect ones self. The secret of performing a charm is willing the result(s) to happen.

For example, when trying to levitate a feather in the air with the levitation charm, it is important to will the feather to rise up in the air. Together with the 'swish and flick' wand movements and the incantation 'Wingardium Leviosa', the magic is charmed to raise the feather and thus you have performed the charm. This however is not like transfiguration where you have an entire part of the subject mastered, since for every charm you have to will something different to happen.

While the example seems fairly straightforward, you'll be surprised at how much trouble first-year students have with this charm. This book helps you with the willing part of charms, but you'll still have to learn the wand movements and incantation by hard. During the years, charms will get more and more complex and the part of willing the magic to work will become exponentially harder.'

Harry could have kissed the book while reading the charms section. It seemed that the book continued with various examples of more and more complex charms, detailing the willing part with every charm mentioned. It seemed like an amazingly interesting subject and Harry couldn't wait to try out some of the charms mentioned in his first-year book. He studied the different charms intently for over a year, memorizing every aspect (including practicing the wand movements) and figuring out the 'will' needed for performing the charm.

Defense Against the Dark Arts was actually a part of charms, or so the book 'Charmed, Defensive and Transfigured secrets' mentioned but Harry picked up his book 'Practical Defense for the Young Witch and Wizard' and started to read. He had already checked out 'Defensive Magical Theory' and though it seemed a bit dull with no practical explanations, the theory was a bit too advances for Harry. The practical book he had started was a bit too descriptive about some of the things the writer had encountered but it did mention some useful spells for defense. There were some small jinxes and hexes which could be useful against opponents like the tickling charm ('rictussempra'), a hurling hex ('everte statum') and a wind-blasting charm ('ventus'). However, the book mainly described several dark creatures and what way to overcome them.

From the introduction to 'Charmed, Defensive and Transfigured secrets' however, Harry recognized this was a much more useful book than the listed one. The book described the origins of Defensive spells and what the secret to those origins was. It listed several spells which would be extremely useful to Harry and he quickly read through the introduction.

'Defensive spells are actually charms as mentioned before. However, they vary slightly with the ordinary charms since these spells all have the purpose to defend or protect. While every spell is pretty much different in this category, it is not enough to will the effect with the wand movements and incantation like it is with charms. Defense Against the Dark Arts is a subject of magic because of the desire to protect and/or defend. While spells such as the disarming spell ('expelliarmus') have the effect of disarming your opponent, it also has the intent to protect or defend against that opponent. This last sentence contains the 'secret to Defense Against the Dark Arts'.

The intent to protect or defend is this secret. For in performing the same spell (same example, the disarming spell), you have to desire disarming your opponent but also intend to protect or defend. Depending on the situation in this subject, either protect, defend or both, the intent is 'usually' in the back of your mind when performing these spells for their stated purpose. However, when practicing the subject in an educational setting, with no intent necessary for the situation, it is still required to perform the spell and so you have to imagine the purpose of performing that spell. For without the intent, the spell will fail and this goes for every defensive spell. Intent spell casting is one of the hardest things in magic and it is also the reason many people have problems with Defense Against the Dark Arts.'

The book contained several defensive spells with their wand movements, incantations and will required which Harry thought they might be above his level for now. After reading that, he quickly moved Defense Against the Dark Arts to the top of his list for when he got to Hogwarts. He committed the spells to memory over the years, including wand movements again and would even practice some from 'Basic Hexes for the Busy and Vexed', 'Jinxes for the jinxed' and 'A Compendium of Common Curses and Their Counter-Actions' as well.

Harry's studies in non-wand based magical subjects from the first-year booklist went much more smoothly. Herbology was a hands-on

kind of subject so all Harry could do was read about the various plants and the way to treat them. 'One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi' was read and memorized fairly quickly and he found it more of a 'Herbology for dummies' kind of book. It did list several products from the plants though, or the plant itself, which could be used as potion ingredients and Harry quickly matched them to several draughts in his potions books. He had also picked up the second-year book 'Encyclopedia of Toadstools' during his return visit to Diagon Alley to get further ahead for Herbology and proceeded with memorizing that book. 'Goshawk's Guide to Herbology' and 'Magical Water Plants of the Mediterranean' were a much more interesting read but they didn't cover the same material as the assigned books for Hogwarts.

Arithmancy was practically a joke. For Harry's Muggle studies in Mathematics went way beyond the math described in 'Numerology and Grammatica' and that was the listed book assigned for the third year. The only new thing Harry learned was about magical numbers and which way they were involved in developing spells. 'New Theory of Numerology' was temporarily forgotten because Harry remembered a Muggle book he encountered in the library called 'Number in Scripture' by E. W. Bullinger that described the use of numbers in various subjects such as Astrology (a form of Divination), Alchemy and Science. Harry found the subject of Numerology immensely fascinating and he was disappointed that he wouldn't start the course until the third year.

Ancient Runes was the most difficult Hogwarts subject Harry had read about. The runes he thought to compare them with, the Muggle 'Elder Futhark', didn't have anything to do with it. The book 'Ancient Runes Made Easy' gave an introduction about the course and listed the 24 most commonly used runes in comparison to the 'Elder Futhark' runic alphabet. The characters or runes themselves however, were completely different and Harry reasoned that this was probably due to the addition of the magical component. However, the book also listed that every ancient civilization had made their own runic script and thus the subject had endless possibilities, according to the listed book for third year. The other books Harry had bought, 'Magical Hieroglyphs and Logograms' and 'Spellman's Syllabary', listed the runic alphabets of the Egyptians and Japanese (former), and of the American Indians, Chinese and old English (latter) together with examples of their main applications. Although the material was way out his league, Harry tried his best to

at least memorize the alphabets and skim through the applications. He discovered that Ancient Runes was mainly used for wards and rituals, which is why the introduction warned excessively against uninformed experimenting.

Astronomy was an underestimated subject by Harry. He had picked up a telescope in the Muggle world, which was better than any they sold in Diagon Alley, since it was necessary for the subject. He had also bought the first-year book to at least partake in the classes at Hogwarts, even though his own astronomy books from the Muggle world had more detailed photos, made in observatories around the world. He reckoned he should mention this to the astronomy teacher, so he decided to do that after he had aced his O.W.L.s. Though astronomy did have its uses according to the introduction in the book; the planetary movements influenced a lot of the magical world. Werewolves of course were susceptible to the lunar calendar; some plants had all kinds of stages influenced by both lunar and planetary positions; Centaurs (half man, half horse according to the magical creature book) practiced astrology and made their life decisions on these planetary movements and even witches and wizards seemed to be involved with it in Divination and since Samhain and Beltane are celebrated in the Wizarding World.

Divination was, as Harry suspected, an inconclusive subject with no useful instruction for the art itself. The book 'Unfogging the future' by Cassandra Vablatsky had many theories and descriptions of visions in crystal balls, palmistry, tea leaf readings and prophecies although no theory about the origin of Divination.

Care of Magical Creatures seemed like a fascinating subject for Harry when reading from 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' by Newt Scamander. Although Harry didn't have any experience without magical creatures around him in the Muggle world, he read up on the entire book to know more about them. Remus had told him that this was an elective from third year on, together with the subjects Arithmancy, Ancient Runes, Divination and Muggle Studies. But Harry had heard about the creatures that seemed to surround the castle from his uncle, so he wanted to learn more about them. During his return visit to Diagon, a quick trip down Knockturn Alley resulted in his next book, 'The Monster book of Monsters' in which he read up on the larger, more dangerous creatures. He already had plans to visit the Hippogriff herd, talk with a Centaur, visit the Elves in the kitchens and go watch the Thestrals.

The last plan resulted in a comical request to his uncle, when Harry read the requirements to be able to see Thestrals.

'Thestrals are seen as a bad omen in the Wizarding World, because many believe they are in some way connected to death. This is partially correct, since they are known scavengers that like to eat raw meat and seem to be able to predict places with carrion for food. However, this is not the only connection they have with death. You have to have seen someone die to be able to see the skeletal, winged horses, which is the main reason that people view them as a bad omen.'

"Damn," Harry muttered.

He got up from his room and walked towards the living area of the apartment where Remus was reclining back for the evening in his lazy chair. He had his eyes focussed on the newspaper in front of him and there was a scotch on the table next to him. Harry almost felt sorry for disturbing him, almost.....

"Remus?" Harry asked to gain his attention.

"Hmm," Remus replied signalling Harry he had at least half his attention.

"I need to see someone die," Harry said, smirking internally when he saw his uncles head move towards him with an audible snap.

"What? Why would you need that?" Remus asked in return and massaged his neck.

Harry said nothing and just passed the book to him opened on the page with the description of Thestrals. His uncle read the piece about being able to see Thestrals and realized what his nephew wanted exactly.

"Ah, I see." Remus muttered quietly. He looked thoughtful in front of him for a while before replying "Okay".

The next weekend, they visited the DNR-ward (do not resuscitate) of a hospital under Disillusionment and Notice-Me-Not Charms and Harry saw an old lady close her eyes for the last time. They left her

with a small bouquet of flowers on the nightstand with a card attached to it, saying 'Thank you' and nothing else.

The last elective for third years, Muggle Studies, had a book on the list named 'Home Life and Social Habits of British Muggles' that Harry completely refused to buy. The book explained the life of Muggles from the nineteenth century saying that they had just discovered a transportation device called an automobile. Harry was still surprised by the level of prejudice that the Wizarding World had for Muggles and their lives just because they didn't have magic.

Potions was the subject of the Hogwarts education that Harry seemed to love most. The precise description of the way the ingredients should look like before they're added to the brew, the extreme caution advised when stirring the cauldron and the detailed required results specified in his potion books was heaven on earth after all the questionable facts about the subjects on the first-year booklist. It was a skill to master, but it was precise, that was a given.

Sure, there were ways to improve the potions' listed preparation manner but that was always due to reasonable deduction for the properties of the ingredients. The listed preparation was always sufficient, Harry noted, but slight alterations from reasonable deductions could give a better result.

Remus had made a list of potions he wanted to have in stock for emergencies and such, so Harry was set to work in his new Potions practice room the day after they returned from their first trip to Diagon Alley. Remus taught him first for a few lessons to ensure he had the proper Potions etiquette and prevented several accidents for example adding 'porcupine quills' before taking the cauldron off the fire. But Remus recognized that to properly learn, Harry had to do things on his own, even if he made a few mistakes that way.

Harry started out with the Boil-Cure Potion and the Burn-Healing Paste which were the easy made potions used for in case of accidents. He continued with Pepper-up Potion, Sleeping Draught and Vitamix Potion, which were all energizing potions and were slightly more difficult for Harry. He started using 'One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi' next to his potion books, 'Magical Drafts and Potions' and 'Advanced Potion-Making', and checked the ingredients for their properties and recommended handling before preparing the potion as needed. He mentally noted that he needed a

book about potion ingredients derived from magical creatures and their properties, since he could only check the ones derived from plants at that moment. He added some adjustments to the potions book with a pencil after confirming their uses worked properly, such as crushing something instead of cutting for the juice; powdering something in a mortar instead of chopping it to enlarge the contact area; adding a single counter-stir (whether clockwise or counter-clockwise, depending on the instructions) for more mixing; using a small flame on the 'Bunsen burner' below the cauldron instead of letting it cool off for a few minutes or even just diluting additives with water to prevent excessive reactions. These adjustments could give a positive result to the ingredient in one potion, but it's obviously not possible in every application, since other ingredients could react negatively towards the alteration. Harry was quickly able to predict the result of his adjustments after some trial-and-error...

As Harry's confidence in his abilities grew, so did his skill. After a year, he was able to make slightly more complex potions and brewed the Antidote to Common Poisons, the Draught of Peace and, after a few tries at least, Skele-Gro. These potions, while not exactly necessary, could be helpful to have in the house and as such joined the shelved stock when they were properly labelled.

His skill in Potions did not go unnoticed by Remus and he started gathering the ingredients for the Wolfsbane Potion which were, while not extremely rare, not common enough to be in a standard Potions kit. Remus had read the instructions and knew it was way beyond his own Potions skills. When he asked his nephew to give it a try, Harry agreed immediately and started his new goal with an unmatched dedication. The book 'Healing Potions' described the Wolfsbane Potion brewing process and it was more complex than anything he had ever made. It takes approximately two weeks to brew for it had to be started the night after the 'new moon' and will have to be drunk on the night after it was finished which was the night of the 'full moon'. Steps are required to be made almost every second night, so it is a potion easy to mess up. Still, Harry managed it almost successfully in September '90 on his third try and Remus was willing to try it out.

After that night of the full moon in September, Harry would forever be known as the youngest brewer of the Wolfsbane Potion by both Remus Lupin and Harry Potter. He would brew the potion perfectly from that month on and Remus would even let Harry in the room

once in a while as he transformed. They celebrated Harry's success with a surprise from Remus, a gift that still put a smile on Harry's face as he remembered that day.

"I can't ever thank you enough, Prongslet." Remus said emotionally after having slept the entire morning and having breakfast at 1pm. Remus had taken to calling Harry 'Prongslet' while he still could, since his nephew had mentioned getting started on the Animagus process the night he arrived at Hogwarts. His 'secret of transfiguration' book had mentioned the process and Harry estimated he could get it done within one year, providing he had enough success at Human Transfiguration. Remus was even starting to believe that he could do it and once he managed the transformation and did not transform into a stag, the name Prongslet would be lost forever.

"That's okay Remus, I'm just happy to help you with your 'furry little problem'." Harry replied, seeing the emotional look on his uncle's face and hoping to put a smile in its place by using his father's nickname of Remus' werewolf problem.

"No, it's not okay. There's something I want to do today, something that I've been keeping from you for this moment. I would like you to have this." Remus handed Harry a long, thin package and he watched his nephew puzzled frown with a smile. They had spoken about brooms and concluded that it was not necessary to buy one since it wasn't possible to fly near the apartment anyway.

Harry ripped open the wrappings and took hold of a normal used broomstick; though straight twigs, the wood was worn and the handle slightly damaged. Remus saw his nephew's puzzled frown turn into a slightly disgusted and confused grimace and decided to speak up.

"James, Sirius and I envisioned this day from the moment you were born. We discussed which brooms would be available this day and which one you would choose for yourself. We were arguing next to the bed where Lily gave birth to you and was sleeping peacefully, or so we thought. When there was a slight pause in our discussion, Lily spoke up with her eyes closed and in her frightful tone:"

'I want a wizard's oath from all three of you that you'll let my son practice on a training broom before letting him ride a real one'.

"The three of us were spooked so badly that we made the oath without thinking about it and now I'm fulfilling it. This is your training broom. If you want, we can go to Potter Manor during weekends since Blinky has cleaned it up properly and I can teach you how to fly over there."

Harry agreed quickly, both because he was eager to fly as well as to see his ancestral home. Breakfast/Lunch finished quickly after and they left, Remus taking Harry by Side-Along Apparition since his nephew had taken to getting used to the sensation. It no longer caused him to feel like throwing up after more than ten times but it still made him feel slightly uneasy.

The house was enormous, larger than any villa Harry had ever seen and Remus explained that while the Potters weren't extremely wealthy like some pureblood families, they did place a lot of value in their family itself. The Potter family, according to him, once had over fifty members which is why the Manor had over twenty bedrooms but wars with Dark Lords, accidental deaths before the age of having children and daughters who didn't continue the male line, took their toll on the number of Potters. The grounds surrounding the house were beautiful, there was a greenhouse near the back, green fields of grass all around, a forest in the west and a small lake on the eastern side of the house above which the sun would rise. Harry could already envision living here and didn't know what to say, except for.

"This is all for me? I own this?"

Remus chuckled and answered affirmatively. He and Harry were shown around the house by Blinky, who was blushing red like a tomato from all the compliments she received for how clean the place looked. After a quick bite to eat in the Dining Room, they moved outside to 'the fields' as they were called with brooms in hand. Remus showed Harry the proper way to mount a broom and went through the basics with him. All too soon, Harry was an expert in the air on Remus' broom and it was time to return home since it was becoming dark outside. Remus told him he could switch his training broom for the new 'Cleansweep 7' at the Quidditch shop in Diagon Alley, next time they went there. Harry suggested they pick up a Quaffle there too to practice a bit and Remus agreed, saying he hadn't played in over almost a decade.

They picked up the Cleansweep two weeks later, together with a Quaffle and some protective Quidditch gear, just in case. Since Harry still went to Muggle school in London, they kept the apartment though Potter Manor became like a second home for them. Harry would often listen to the stories of Remus when he, his father and Sirius were staying at the house. The 'Sirius' part of the attack on his parents was explained to Harry by his uncle, but they had both agreed that they wouldn't avoid the subject because of it. His Potions practice got put on hold for a week, so Harry could read 'Quidditch Through the Ages'. He practiced Quidditch a lot and during those times, Remus would teach him some moves as a Chaser, since that's what position his father had on the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

Harry continued his Potions practice from the book 'Healing Potions' which were all more complex than he had previously brewed, except for the Wolfsbane Potion of course. His trial-and-error was time consuming and he didn't get a chance to finish the book but he was able to brew potions like the Wound-Cleaning Potion, a different version of Skele-Gro, which was for broken bones instead of regrowing entire bones, the Blood-Replenishing Potion and the Antidote to Uncommon Poisons.

Moste Potente Potions covered Veritaserum and Polyjuice Potion and Harry managed to brew the latter it perfectly in just two months brewing period. Veritaserum was more difficult however and Harry didn't have the time anymore to brew it before his eleventh birthday. He decided he could always practice this potion later if necessary, and since it probably wasn't needed in the house anyway it was not a problem.

'Occlumency is the art of shielding ones mind from external penetration by Legilimency. To successfully prevent the Legilimens from finding anything in your mind through Occlumency, one must first know something about Legilimency. The art of delving in someone's mind and correctly interpreting the findings isn't easy to be sure, but an experienced Legilimens can enter a mind like an entity and navigate at will through the many layers of a person's mind. An inexperienced Legilimens can't navigate, will be attacked by random memories from the target's mind and will be easily detected and even expelled if the target knows Occlumency.

To manage to protect your mind from Legilimency, one must shield your mind with the use of magic against these entity-like penetrations. To be able to form a shield around your mind, one must first be able to visualize the mind as a storage facility for your memories and current thoughts. The shield around it will depend primarily on what kind of 'mindscape' people have, which is what the final visualization of the mind is called.

The visualizing of the mind is one of the most difficult parts of Occlumency. It can't be told or taught what your inner image of the mind should look like, but people usually use images, items or structures from their daily lives. These mindscapes represent the place or thing that they are most comfortable with for representing their mind and in no way does the size compare to mental capacity. Smaller mindscapes are usually easier to shield, but they are also more practical for the Legilimens to navigate through. Finding what your mindscape looks like can take several years, but various meditation techniques can speed up the process.'

Harry had started Occlumency on the night of the same day he started his Potions education, the day after their first visit to Diagon. Remus had told him beforehand that the process would take a lot of time and patience, but Harry had expected to browse through the subject like he did with the others. He was wrong.

Occlumency was the most difficult thing Harry had ever tried in his life. He used the meditation techniques he had learned in Tai Chi to find his mindscape but it took forever. After a year and a half, and many interruptions from Remus, Harry finally discovered that his mindscape was a vast library. The library was dark with lots of shadows and long rows of shelves lined with books. Remus had checked his mindscape after that with his mediocre skill in Legilimency, but didn't give any sort of tips about the way he should continue.

'When you have discovered your mindscape, it is important that you explore it entirely and not leave peaces unknown. Any unknown part of your mindscape can become an entrance point for a Legilimens or at least a weakness to your Occlumency shields. The shields must cover every part of your mindscape and have to be durable enough to withstand any sort of attack.

For example, a known practice shield can be a brick wall around your mindscape, laid brick by brick in your mind during meditation, but that wall can be penetrated in several ways. Legilimency attacks can take on almost any form and as such a brick wall can be stormed and broken, pierced by a small bullet-like attack or can even be flexible enough to slip through any cracks present in the wall.

Shields can take on almost any form in your mind, but you have to realize that the upholding of an Occlumency shield uses magic to work. The shields can be put up consciously to maintain a higher level of protection (for instance when talking to a known Legilimens) but it is important to have one shield up at all times to at least recognize the intrusions. Practicing with a Legilimens is the best way to test your Occlumency shields to make them more resilient against attacks.'

Harry immediately started with his extra wall around the library in his mindscape and, after six months, decided to built a second and even a third one in front of it. The secondary walls took less time to construct in his mind since he had constructed one already. By Januari '91, he was finished with the walls and Remus pointed out a weakness in his design, the roof of the library was vulnerable to attacks. Harry cursed himself into oblivion for missing such a vital part and thought about what other kind of shields he could place around his library/mind.

He had started watching Star Trek: The Next Generation on television and thought about placing a force field around his mindscape. The idea was new and innovative, exactly what the book had recommended, citing that Legilimens would have found ways to penetrate the older, known shields.

And so Harry placed a real, science-fiction force field around his mindscape, with the energy coming from inside the library. The shield was put up carefully by him, to make sure it covered everything and to prevent weaknesses. He also decided to put a shroud of dense mist around the library to confuse Legilimens and prevent any quick glances into mind and shields. The mist turned dark immediately after placing it and while it surprised Harry, he thought the protection was even better this way. It took him until the third week of August to complete his shields and he would continue with the Occlumency book when he arrived at Hogwarts.

Remus had told Harry that the force field was an incredible idea and he couldn't find a way to penetrate them, but also that his skill in Legilimency was nonexistent compared to what Dumbledore could do.

During the three years, Harry read pretty much everything he had bought on that first visit to Diagon and Knockturn Alley. He even learned the first-year books by heart, including 'Hogwarts, A History', so that he would be prepared for his first year at Hogwarts. He didn't find it conceivable that other students would have done so, but he wanted to have enough spare time for his side studies such as for Healing and the Dark arts. He had read about those subjects although he didn't get very far in the books without performing the magic. Other books also fell in that category such as 'Practical Household magic', 'Enchanting Enchantments', 'The Underestimated Art of Animation' and 'Parseltongue Curses' although the last one might be considered as part of the Dark Arts. He had estimated that many of the books he had bought might be beyond his capabilities for now but he wanted to at least try them out and confirm whether or not he could perform the magics.

School Supplies

Harry woke up, not screaming for once, on his eleventh birthday. Due to his developed skill in Potions he had some Dreamless Sleep Potion available and so he didn't experience his usual pre-birthday nightmares about his time at the Dursleys.

'It's my birthday today', he suddenly realized.

'We're going to go to Diagon today', his thought process continued.

'I'm going to get a wand today', he concluded.

"I'M GOING TO GET A WAND!" He suddenly shouted when his realizations hit the end-result.

He jumped out of his bed and sprinted towards Remus' room to wake him up for the day, so that they could leave as soon as possible. But as he entered through the open door, he noticed the room was empty, the bed was made and the room was very bright. Too bright.

He checked his uncle's alarm clock and saw that it indicated it was 11:14am. He overslept, he realized. He overslept on the day they were going to get his wand. This could only mean one thing...

"REMUS!" Harry shouted.

He sprinted towards the kitchen and saw his uncle sitting at the breakfast table, refreshed with a newspaper in one hand, a cup of coffee in the other and an apologetic look on his face.

"I know, I'm sorry but I slipped some Sleeping Draught in your hot cacao yesterday evening. I knew you wouldn't be able to sleep and even if you did, then you would probably have been awake since 6am. This way, you at least slept enough and we won't be extremely early. We have more than enough time to finish our business with the Goblins and get your wand at Ollivanders."

Remus said, making Harry slightly nervous about whether they also had enough time for his surprise....

Since Harry finished primary school and with that his Muggle education, Remus had quit his job as a Muggle school teacher to rejoin the Wizarding World together with his nephew. They would move to Potter Manor but he was looking for a job to sustain them and, as a werewolf, didn't have much success. The jobs that he could apply for earned so little that Remus wouldn't even be able to provide for himself, let alone for them both. Harry had one day asked his uncle about his dream job in the Wizarding World, before all the drama happened. Remus, oblivious to his nephew's intentions, had replied that he had always wanted to open a pub/inn like the Leaky Cauldron for all kinds of customers, regardless of species or any other prejudice.

One day, during one of their visits to Diagon Alley, Harry had gotten rid of Remus saying he had to deal with something at Gringotts and asked that he go do something else while Harry dealt with Sharptooth. This wasn't uncommon, since after he returned the book he had borrowed from the goblin (in pristine condition), Harry had taken almost every chance to learn as much Gobbledegook as possible. When Harry was in Sharptooth's office, he explained his proposition together with what would be necessary and asked the goblins for help. Sharptooth, as a goblin, was eager for more profit, recognized the potential and was not averse to helping this particular young wizard who showed the goblins the respect of an equal. So he agreed with the proposition and would do the tasks set for him.

Today, on Harry's eleventh birthday, he would finally be able to make things happen and would have to sign the necessary agreements at Gringotts to finish the deal. It would take more time than Remus had planned for and Harry hoped that they would arrive early enough. He pretended to be angry because of the Sleeping Draught and stalked back to his room, getting ready for the day in record time.

After breakfast, Remus took Harry to the Leaky Cauldron by Side-Along Apparition and they entered the pub around noon. It was surprisingly full and, since they would be 'coming out' today anyway, didn't wear any glamours. Remus was recognized by the bartender, Tom, who greeted them enthusiastically.

"Remus Lupin? I haven't seen you in ages! Welcome back! How have you been?"

Remus, though eager to get going, replied equally enthusiastic but didn't seem that fond of stopping and talking in the middle of the pub.

"Good afternoon, Tom. I'm doing well, thank you. I've been living in the Muggle world, raising young Harry here and we're going shopping for Hogwarts supplies today."

"Harry? Harry Potter? Good gods, he looks just like James! You're starting Hogwarts this year as well, kid? We just saw the Boy-Who-Lived here not two hours ago. He's starting his first year also this year and is probably still shopping in the alley. If you hurry, you can catch a glimpse of him in one of the stores...." The bartender said this towards Harry with such enthusiasm about the Boy-Who-Lived that Harry suspected he might be jealous of going to Hogwarts with Neville Longbottom in the same year.

"Oh, sorry about that professor. Harry, I'd like you to meet professor Quirell, your new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher." Tom said this motioning with a hand towards a strange young man with a turban wrapped around his head who had cleared his throat at being ignored.

"It's nice to meet you, professor. I'm Harry Potter." Harry said while shaking the man's hand. He briefly thought he felt something brush against his Occlumency shields but dismissed it after a few seconds.

The professor replied in kind and introduced himself with a stuttering voice. Harry thought the man might be suffering from emotional exhaustion but kept his thoughts to himself and followed his uncle towards the courtyard in the back after saying a polite goodbye. They entered the Alley and moved through the throngs of people towards Gringotts. Harry picked up several parts of conversations from the people they passed;

"Did you see his scar?"

"He is kind of pudgy but as famous as he is, who cares?"

"He must be a really powerful wizard....."

"Did you know he's signing autographs in Flourish & Blotts later today?"

"Do you think he would marry me if I asked him now?"

"I want to have his children!"

Harry was slightly disgusted with the last one and quickly stopped listening to people talking about Neville Longbottom. He realized that the Boy-Who-Lived was even more idolized in reality by the Wizarding World than mentioned in the books. 'Sure', Harry thought, 'they should feel grateful for causing the demise of an evil wizard but this was taking things way too far.' He supposed Neville might feel bothered by all the attention which originated from his parents deaths and Harry could sympathize with him, but he reckoned he should meet the boy first and form his opinion on him after.

They arrived at Gringotts and Remus went to the counter for visiting the vault while Harry spoke to a small goblin in fluent Gobbledegook and asked him to be taken to master goblin Sharptooth's office in their own tongue.

"Mosh te, master goblin Sharptooth." Harry started in Gobbledegook. (Greetings)

"Ank ye wis, young wizard." The Potter account manager replied. (Welcome)

"Were you successful in your negotiations?" Harry asked, reverting to English because his Gobbledegook was still dismal.

"Very successful, I managed to obtain an option for the sale of the property you requested for 80% of the original price. I have the sale's contract here at hand, together with the licence requests obtained from the Ministry of Magic. All they require is the signature of Lord Potter and they shall be filed with the 'Wizarding Chamber of Commerce', registered automatically at the Ministry of Magic with approval granted because of your title. Shall we get that piece of business out of the way first?" The Goblin reported and asked about Harry's intention of becoming Lord Potter.

"Yes please." He stood and drew himself up, standing in the posture his uncle had taught him. "Master goblin Sharptooth, I, Harry James Potter, claim my right of the End-of-Line clause. I wish to become Lord Potter, Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter and join

my fellow Lords as part of the Wizengamot." Harry slumped after finishing the official request and sat down with a sigh.

The goblin nodded with a smile, amused at the antics of the eleven year old wizard in front of him. He spoke up while he received a beautifully decorated box from a goblin who just came in.

"Very well, as the End-of-Line clause requires, you are eleven years of age or older and the last of the Potter line. All that remains is the acceptance of the Potter ring, proving that you are a Potter by blood and by magic." Sharptooth opened the box and slid it to Harry, presenting a signet ring with the Potter Crest on it. The Crest was an image of two crossed wands in the form of an X, a Griffin on the left side and a Dragon on the right.

Harry picked up the ring, examined it with reverence and put it on very unceremoniously. Nothing happened, which was expected since Harry qualified for the acceptance of the ring. It turned invisible to all, at Harry's will so it could remain inconspicuous.

"Congratulations, Lord Potter." Sharptooth said while inclining his head as a sign of respect.

Harry imitated the gesture and asked politely if they could move along. He quickly signed the contract of the sale and licence requests, wincing as the blood quill kept drawing blood. There were requests for a warding licence, which would be done by the goblins as per the agreement, a request for the licence of selling liquor and a request for the licence of harbouring werewolves during the full moon. The last one was almost never requested, but the licence was designed to prevent werewolf insurrections against the Ministry of Magic.

The files were put into the appropriate filing cabinets by Sharptooth after his inspection, from where they would be sent to the Ministry of Magic or/and the 'Wizarding Chamber of Commerce'. Harry received a copy of the deed for the empty store in Knockturn Alley, while the original went to the Potter family vault. 80% of the original price of 120.000 galleons, so 96.000 galleons was transferred from a budget vault to the vault of the previous owner, who was probably still in Azkaban for smuggling rare magical creatures. The budget vault was a vault created by Sharptooth and Harry from funds out of the Potter family vault to sustain Remus' future business. Harry received a Gringotts key together with a business contract for Remus to sign.

Harry expressed his immense gratitude in Gobbledegook for his help and said that he would send Remus by for making the appointment of warding the property. He left the office with a white envelope in his bag and smile on his face, following a small goblin back to the main hall where he met up with Remus.

They left the bank and moved around the various people milling about towards Ollivanders, where Harry would receive his wand. Harry was quivering in anticipation of both finally getting his wand and presenting Remus with his new job.

When they entered the wand store, Harry was certain that he felt something brush against his Occlumency shields again and saw a distorted image of an extremely old man to his left. He reckoned it must be Ollivander under a Disillusionment Charm, spooking every customer by sneaking up behind them. Harry decided to give in to the old man's antics and moved towards the counter. There was no doubt in his mind that his werewolf uncle had already sensed/smelled the man behind them but was also willing to allow things to take its course.

"Hello?" Harry called in a fake apprehensive tone.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Potter. I remember the day your parents came in for their wands like it was yesterday. Your mother's, Lily Evans, was 10¼ inches, willow, swishy and good for charms work. Your father however, James Potter, favoured a mahogany wand, 11 inches, pliable and excellent for transfiguration." Harry spun around in fake surprise and saw the image of Ollivander fade into existence. He raised his eyebrow at the mentioning of his name and parents without having introduced himself and things immediately came together in his head.

"Hello to you too, Mr. Ollivander. That's a rather neat detection ward you have up there. Tell me, do you find it acceptable to creep up on eleven-year-olds from behind with a Disillusionment Charm?" Harry heard Remus choke on his breath next to him but didn't waiver his attention from Ollivander while he asked this.

"So much like James..." Ollivander started to say.

"... and yet so different," Harry finished. Remus had said that many times before.

"You knew where I was from the moment you entered?" Ollivander asked.

Harry nodded.

"Interesting... I suppose you're here for a wand then?" Ollivander continued.

"No, I thought I'd come for the view, as marvellous as it is," Harry replied sarcastically.

Ollivander chuckled appreciatively to Harry's sarcasm and moved towards the counter. Once he was behind it, he placed his hands on the top and looked at Harry with a piercing look. His strange, pale, silvery eyes met Harry's green ones and Harry felt as though he was being scanned, though he didn't feel anything on his Occlumency shields. Suddenly, Ollivander spoke, "would you like to get measured for your wand Mr. Potter?"

Harry nodded just once, properly cowed for now by the creepy old man in this dusty shop.

"Very well, which is your wand arm?" Ollivander asked, as he got a long tape measure with silver markings from beneath the counter. Harry considered they might be runes of some kind, but he didn't recognize them.

"I'm ambidextrous," Harry replied.

"Interesting.... That'll make my job all the more fun." Ollivander flicked his wand at the tape measure and it checked pretty much every distance on Harry's body. Ollivander moved towards the shelves of the shop, hummed every now and then and collected several long, thin boxes. "That will do," Ollivander said with his back towards them and the tape measure crumpled into a heap on the floor. He came back to the counter with a number of boxes and held one out, opened for Harry to pick up the wand.

"Try this one first. Beachwood and dragon heartstring. Eleven inches. Nice and flexible, good for charms and healing," Ollivander said.

Harry took the wand and felt a chill run down his spine.

Ollivander immediately snatched the wand out of his hand and returned it to the box. "Nope, not that one. Perhaps something more robust. Try this one, maple and phoenix feather. Nine inches, and a bit sturdy, very well suited for defense."

Harry picked it up and again it seemed to radiate a negative feeling. He gave the wand back to Ollivander who expected it returned and continued on with the next.

"Perhaps this one then, Yew and Unicorn hair. Good for transfiguration."

But that one also felt just wrong. He didn't know what to do so he just waved it and immediately blew out a few drawers of the cabinet on the right. He looked apologetic at Ollivander, but he seemed to become more cheerful with every wand that Harry denied. It continued on with every wand on the shelves around the room but Harry just didn't feel anything from the wand. Remus had described his first selection of a wand and Harry was getting more and more eager to get that feeling of completion, warmth and acceptance from a wand.

When the final wand was in Harry's hand, he looked towards his uncle, panic clearly shown in his eyes. Even Ollivander seemed to have lost his happiness of a tricky customer, replaced by a frown for a now wandless customer.

"This has never happened before, I might have had a holly and phoenix feather wand that could have suited you but it chose another wizard just this morning. Because remember this Mr. Potter, it is the wand that chooses the wizard. Not the other way around." Ollivander explained.

"What do you suppose I do? I need to have a wand...." Harry said, fear clear in his voice.

"Yes indeed. Hmm what to do.... I do not know if you're averse to the idea of a second-hand wand, remember I've never had this kind of situation before, but I have a selection of used wands in the back. We could see if one of those is fit for you. Otherwise I suggest you

go to a different wand store," Ollivander replied, with obvious disapproval in his voice when he spoke of another wand store.

Harry looked towards his uncle, the unspoken question written on his face. Remus just shrugged, willing to check out the possibility since they could always go to another wand shop after.

"We'll check out the selection of second-hand wands, if you don't mind," Harry spoke with a small measure of confidence gotten from his uncle's lack of fright.

"Not at all, but it's extremely rare for a wand to choose another wizard after its former master has passed. However it may be possible that one of these wands could still work properly for you." Ollivander said as he motioned Harry and Remus towards the back where shelves with open boxes lay. Every wand was angled in a way as if it was revered, in an open box on display, and catching dust for who knows how many years.

Ollivander continued, "If the wand is suitable for you to channel your magic through it, you'll feel a slight pull in your abdomen. If you would please, put your hand above each wand and if you feel a pull from the wand, point it out to me and I'll take them up to the front. Don't pick them up; we don't want to do that in here."

Harry went over every wand with his hand, selecting and pointing out five different ones while he continued. He felt different pulls from each wand, but none of them gave a feeling like Remus had explained. Ollivander named the people they belonged to and the wand's properties as he picked them up from the shelves....

"Cygnus Black, mahogany and dragon heartstring, very select for transfiguration."

"Morfing Gaunt, yew and basilisk fang, enormously particular to dark magic."

"Charles Diggory, Ebony/Oak and phoenix feather, dual wood wand, very powerful and suited for defensive magic."

"Wolfric Vulpus, Rosewood and Thestral hair, dangerous and capable of miraculous charms work."

"Hadrian Derwent, Maple and unicorn hair, the definition of purity, excellent for healing and cleansing spells."

Ollivander spoke the names after one another. However, he seemed to become slightly out of breath because of shock and revelation. When Harry stopped scanning the wands to check if he was alright, he spoke up. "Mr. Potter, after seeing that you have an affinity to most, if not all wand magics, I can't say it's a surprise that none of my wands chose you. Let's see which of these is suited best for you, shall we."

Ollivander walked out of the room towards the front of the shop while motioning Harry to follow him. Harry went to go after him but suddenly he stopped next to a shelf he hadn't gotten to yet. He saw one single box lying on the entire shelf where the pull came from, but it was a larger pull from a wand than he had before, it was more familiar. The wand inside the box was beautifully carved, unlike any other wands he had seen before. He reached out and grabbed the wand just as Ollivander and Remus came back to see where he went.

Suddenly, Harry gasped and the back room lit in shadows. Every point of light, whether torch, candle or window suddenly dimmed and Harry felt a rush of power entering his body, coming from the wand. This was his wand, he knew it. He held it reverently in his hands and inspected it thoroughly. The wand was made out of a black coloured wood and it was covered with dust but Harry thought he saw a glimmer of red in the wood. It had a small band of runes engraved in the wood, right next to the handle and Harry recognized 'Trust', 'Power' and 'Shadow' among them. He didn't recognize the feeling from the previous wands he held, like he'd been able to distinguish the phoenix feather from the unicorn hair and the dragon heartstring wands.

Remus and Ollivander were watching Harry while he picked up his wand and what happened next scared both of them quite a bit. The shadows seemed to be drawn around Harry as he held the wand for the first time. His usually vibrant green eyes were black as night and he radiated a power that reminded Remus of when Dumbledore was angry. Harry seemed to come down from his shadow induced high, his eyes turned back to green and Ollivander kept muttering words like "incredible", "amazing" and "unreal".

Harry looked towards them and smiled as he saw their astonished looks. "It seems that I found my wand, don't you think so Mr. Ollivander?"

Ollivander seemed to snap out of his daze and started to explain the history and properties of that particular wand. "It seems so, Mr. Potter. The wand you hold in your hands right now was the wand of 'Mordred Ameretat'. He was one of the only known shadow mages in history and it seems that his wand has chosen you as its new master. He lived in the 1600s and was rumoured to have been descended from 'Morgana le Fay'."

Ollivander continued, "The wand is made from African Blackwood with the heartstring of a Nundu and is exactly 12 inches long. It was made in Ethiopia, a part now known as Eritrea, by an ancient Egyptian wand maker who was there the day Mordred killed the Nundu. I don't know if you realise this Mr. Potter but a Nundu is an incredibly powerful creature and as such, that is an incredibly powerful wand."

Harry could only nod, still in a daze from the power high of moments before. They returned to the front of the shop where he picked up wand polish and paid for his purchases. They left the store after thanking Ollivander for his help and walked towards Knockturn Alley, where Harry wanted to pick up the rest of his first-year supplies. Remus had no idea though that Harry had another reason for going to Knockturn Alley. Even though it took a long time to select a wand at Ollivanders, it was only three in the afternoon so there was enough time for the surprise.

As Harry and Remus walked through Diagon Alley, they noticed a large gathering in front of Flourish & Blotts so they decided to check it out. When they neared the crowd, Harry was assaulted again by the idolizing of the Boy-Who-Lived but what surprised him most was the centre of attention in the gathering. A pudgy looking kid with a scar on his forehead, slightly smaller than Harry himself, was handing out autographs to the people and posing for a photographer with a blonde reporter at his side. Harry realized that this was the Boy-Who-Lived, Neville Longbottom himself, and taking advantage of his fame as much as possible.

He motioned for Remus to leave with him just as Neville announced to crowd that he would go to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and

Wizardry this September and the entire gathering erupted with applause.

Harry shook his head, disappointed that someone could turn into such a pretentious person over the event that caused your parents' deaths. Remus noticed his nephew's sombre expression and hugged him from the side, immediately understanding what was going on inside his head.

"So, where do you want to go first?" Remus asked as he and Harry entered Knockturn Alley.

Harry's eyes lit up with excitement and motioned towards Isolde's first. He still needed new robes for school and wanted to pick up new normal clothes as well, since he grew out of his old ones. The Hogwarts letter that arrived this morning mentioned three sets of plain school robes and a winter cloak, but didn't say where you had to buy them so Harry would in no way ever get them at Madam Malkin's. Remus, recognizing his nephew's obsession with good clothes, said he would walk around the alley for a bit while Harry placed his order.

The visit to Isolde's almost took an hour, but Harry was set and clothed for another year. His robes would be black (as required) but tailored and made from Acromantula silk so they wouldn't be as unsightly as the ones students had on in Diagon Alley. He picked up some normal magical clothes because he would be at Hogwarts anyway and thus added several dragon-hide pants, some acromantula silk shirts and a rough, black, dragonhide leather jacket to his wardrobe. It isn't that he would leave his Muggle wardrobe of normal pants, jeans and dress shirts behind; it's just that he was used choosing what he would wear for the day.

Remus returned while Harry finished his shopping, asking for the final order to be delivered by owl post when ready. They picked up a new first-year potions kit and both glass and crystal vials at the apothecary and Harry added a potions belt at the last minute to the purchases. 'Frederick' raised an eyebrow at the last addition, but didn't say anything; well aware of Harry's prodigal potions skills, because of their frequent visits to the apothecary. A potions belt was a normal belt with six hidden compartments for potion vials, usually used only by Potions masters.

They picked up a trunk 'suitable for a pureblood' with three different compartments, which was enough for Harry. The price would have been only slightly more expensive than a normal trunk, since it used the same amount of materials and the dimensions for the other trunk compartments would have been created with magic. However, Harry wanted to have a secure place for hiding things and requested every security measure provided by the trunk store owner. The final result required a lot of charms or enchantments, three drops of blood and a synchronisation to Harry's magical core and it would only open for Harry himself, no exceptions.

The wand store was a surprise to both Remus and Harry. They visited the shop to get a wand holster for Harry but the moment they entered Popovich' Wand Store, a relatively young man with brown hair and a smile on his face came up to them, presumably Mr. Popovich himself, and steered them towards the back. There, they looked around in wonder as they saw a real workshop for creating wands with shelves full of different ingredients and wooden logs, waiting to be carved into a wand.

"Welcome customers, I am Sergei Popovich. Since my ward didn't sense the signature of an Ollivander wand on you, I assume you came here for a custom wand instead of those premade things of Ollivander's?" Mr. Popovich asked as he motioned around the workshop.

Harry, having read about the advantage a second wand gave in the war in 'The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts', immediately confirmed the wandmaker's belief before Remus could deny it and introduced himself and his uncle. Harry surmised that since the wand he had in his bag wasn't made by Ollivander himself, it wouldn't be detected by Mr. Popovich's wards. Remus, quickly catching on, kept quiet and stepped back to allow the man to work with Harry.

"Do you know what the creation of a wand involves, Mr. Potter?" Popovich asked.

Harry shook his head dumbly.

"The creation of a wand is finding the right combination of both wand core and wood type. After that, the assimilation process starts where the core and wood are combined into a wand capable of casting spells, this is where my expertise is required. And last but not least

is the inscribing of the wand with runes for the caster's preference. The last part is usually performed by the witch or wizard, so that no other knows the specifics of that particular wand. I have a book containing instructions for that last part of the wand creation process in case you're interested." Mr. Popovich told them while preparing his workshop for the process. He was lining up every jar, vial and wood type that he had in the room. Harry nodded excessively when the wandmaker looked towards him questioningly about the book, eager to learn more about wandlore.

"Now, please walk around the room slowly and you'll feel a pull from various objects on the shelves. These substances are drawn to a part of your magical core and, when created into a wand, will be able to channel your magic. I want you to gather the items you feel connected to and place them on this table." Popovich motioned to the ingredients and types of wood first and finished at the empty spot on his workbench.

Harry started walking around the room and pulls from six different core substances, several of which he didn't recognize and placed them on the table. He moved towards the types of wood and picked up three different ones. He realized that all these things could never make one wand and thought he had made a mistake in coming here. However, Mr. Popovich nodded at every thing he apprehensively picked up and gave him silent assurance that this was normal. When he returned empty-handed to the table, the wandmaker spoke up.

"Very nice, it's rare for someone to pick up so many different substances for their first check. It shows that you have a diverse magical affinity towards the different subjects of magic; we'll just have to find out which ones are right for your wand. To select the suitable ingredients for your wand, you must place your hand on each core substance from which you felt a pull, whether jar or vial and tell me what kind of connection you feel towards that particular substance...."

Harry placed his hand on the first jar which contained a red and gold feather inside that he recognized as a phoenix feather from the feeling. He described it as something warm like fire, only at a remote distance. It had a restrained feeling to it, like it was being extinguished.

Mr. Popovich picked up the jar, placed it on the left side of the table and motioned towards the next jar with a white feather inside. He didn't mention whether it was selected for the creation of the wand or not, he just urged Harry to go on to the second substance he felt a pull from.

This one felt majestic and proud, like it was roaring for all to hear and couldn't wait to get out, flying into the air. The jar was moved to the right side of the table and Harry continued with a vial of milky liquid inside it. It felt somewhat tingly and familiar, not in a positive way but like you're meeting your next door neighbour who gives you the creeps. Popovich put it on the left side and made the 'carry on' gesture with his hands.

Harry, realizing he was doing it right, moved towards the next jar. It was a jar which held a long bone from something he didn't recognize. He matched the feeling to a chill running down his spine, like an ice cube running slowly down his back and placed the jar on the left himself. Popovich smiled and so Harry continued. The next one was a jar with a black cloudlike liquid and Harry had never seen anything like it. He found it interesting and when he touched the jar, the feeling only increased. It was a positive curiousness that was attractive and he didn't want to leave it alone. He placed it on the right and touched the final vial. It was a silvery hair with a feeling that Harry recognized as a unicorn hair, only this one was slightly off. It felt drawn to him but also like he was being rejected, like hard-to-get but definitely negative so he placed it on the left.

"Well done. You selected the wand cores of a Griffin feather and a Dementor's essence. I didn't tell you what they were before in case you were prejudiced in any way and now that you've chosen without the influence from others, you'll get a wand with the best possible connection to your magic. Now, on to the woods....." Popovich explained and continued when he placed the three types of wood in front of Harry.

"It's the same process, only you must touch the wand cores with one hand while touching the type of wood with the other. The connection will be felt instantly and it's possible to feel connected to more than one type of wood, so don't be alarmed if you cannot separate one from another."

Harry placed one hand on the wand core jars and moved his other towards the first type of wood he felt a pull from. It was a dark brown type with black streaks through it and, as he touched it, he gasped immediately. Harry was suddenly assaulted by the image-like feeling of the weather, both of storms and sun situations. It was a definite positive feeling and so he placed the log of wood with a thud on the right side of the table while scowling towards the grinning wandmaker. He repeated the process cautiously with the next wood type which was a light, almost white colour, but he got nothing like the former effect. He passed it to the left and moved towards the last wooden log. It was a light brown coloured one, with crème coloured streaks running through it, almost the exact opposite of the first type of wood. He received the same reaction as with the first and placed it on the right.

"That's what I expected," the wandmaker declared and continued with his reasoning. "You see, the first type is known as 'Lignum Vitae' or the 'wood of life', as it translates from Latin. The second one you selected is cypress wood, associated with funerals and death. The first type of wood coincides with the griffin feather, which is a guardian of treasure and the second corresponds with the other, the Dementor's essence, which is collected after the Dementor's kiss is performed." Popovich explained as if it was all easy enough to understand. Harry realized he would have to read up on wand creation, its various magical cores and the selection process for custom wands to make sense of what he had just been told.

"The creation of this wand will take approximately three days and I'll need three drops of your blood to bind the wand to you. I cannot send it to you through owl post since I'll need to check the connection to your magical core." Popovich said and asked for Harry's blood as if asking for the daily news.

He positioned his hand above a bowl and the wandmaker sliced his hand open with another one of those wicked-looking daggers. After the three drops were in the bowl, the cut gently sealed itself and they moved back to the front of the store. Harry agreed to come back after three days and bought the book on inscribing a wand with runes and a pair dragonhide wrist holsters that could turn invisible. Only one of the pair was the actual reason they entered the store in the first place.

When they returned to the streets of Knockturn Alley, Harry motioned for Remus to follow him back towards the entrance to Diagon Alley. Remus, thinking Harry forgot something in Isolde's or wanted to go back towards Diagon already, just followed without complaint. When his nephew stopped in front of the empty building where a magical animal smuggler had been, Remus was slightly wary, wondering what his nephew had in mind.

"Remus?" Harry asked to gain his attention.

"Yes Harry?" Remus replied, wondering why his nephew kept looking ahead of him towards the empty lot.

"I have a gift for you." Harry continued.

"But I have a gift for you, since it's your birthday today." Remus answered, slightly confused.

"Remember when I asked you a few months ago what your ideal job in the Wizarding World would be?" Harry asked while getting the white envelope out of his bag.

"Uh-huh....."

"This is it, your new job. It's..... It's a thank you for all these years of looking after me." Harry passed him the envelope and Remus accepted it, even more confused by his nephew's emotional state. He opened the seal and read the contract, going into shock as he realized what it was exactly.

"Harry..... This is too much, I can't accept this." Remus said quietly.

"You're right, you can't. Because of your werewolf affliction, you are not allowed to own any business, shop or otherwise. You are allowed however to work in a business of which you own 49% of the stocks, thus working for your own income and providing for your nephew." He drew himself up to his full height and spoke in an officious tone.

"As of this morning, I am Lord Harry James Potter, head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, emancipated minor by right of the End-of-Line clause for old wizarding families and majority shareholder of the new business venture in Knockturn Alley." He

showed the Potter ring to his uncle, who had tears of happiness in his eyes. Remus grabbed him in a deep hug and spoke quietly.

"Thank you, thank you so much. You don't know how much this means to me. Does this..... Does this mean you'll live alone at Potter Manor?" He asked in an apprehensive tone.

"No, as the majority shareholder of my latest investment, I've decided to keep a close eye on it when not at Hogwarts." Harry said with a smile. "Providing that you sign that contract, you're still stuck with me for two months every year." Remus just hugged him closer, not knowing what to say.

"Can I go in? Check out what it looks like on the inside?" Remus asked eagerly.

"There should be a magical goblin key in the envelope which opens the door." Remus held out a small key. "Not that one, that's for the budget vault." Harry saw his uncle's astonished look, and decided to elaborate. "To set up the new business, a budget vault has been opened with the necessary funds. Goblins must be hired to ward the premises because of the contract and if requested, can provide assistance with the construction of a basement beneath the property and placing expansion enchantments."

Remus fished out the proper key and Harry left him to his own devices to explore the new pub/inn. He wanted to get something for himself for his birthday and decided to check out Diagon Alley for the more 'normal' shops. He was finished in Knockturn anyway and so he promised Remus that he would meet him in Flourish & Blotts, saying he had to pick up the new additions to the first-year booklist.

As he strolled down a darkening Diagon Alley, stores getting ready to close, he didn't really find anything interesting until he came upon a jewellery store. He entered out of curiosity and found it to be similar to a Muggle jewellery store, since there were shelves full of earrings, watches, rings, necklaces and pendants. Harry, having read that a watch was a wizarding gift for coming of age, skipped passed those and the earrings, finding them not to his liking. He already had a beautiful ring on his finger so that only left necklaces and pendants. He waved off the salesman who probably didn't expect to sell anything to Harry anyway and examined the pendants. He found himself drawn to a golden Egyptian Ankh and the feeling

was similar to the one in Popovich' Wand Store but more primitive, like they were destined for each other. It wasn't decorated with gems or anything, just a two inch long, basic and pure, golden pendant. Like most of the jewellery in the shop, it had a card next to it defining its magical properties together with the price and it mentioned that it was an unknown protection pendant, recently salvaged from a tomb in Egypt.

Harry thought the price a little steep for something unknown, but because of the connection bought it without complaint. He reckoned he could get the goblins to enchant it for him and bought a plain, black leather rope with it to put it on. He left the store and walked towards Flourish & Blotts, but it was already closed for the day.

When Remus arrived and expressed his gratitude over and over again, they disappeared home and planned to come back in three days to finish the rest of their shopping. When Harry was finally in his room, resting on his bed, Remus entered to give him his birthday present and wished him a happy birthday. It was a magical armour made from tight fitting dragonhide, to be worn under his clothes and protecting him in dangerous situations. It was a dark green colour, possibly originating from a 'Romanian Longhorn' dragon out of the Romanian dragon preserve, which Harry had read about in 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them'. Harry thanked his uncle immensely and wondered when he would wear it. He hoped not too many times.....

During their return visit, Harry picked up his (second) wand at Popovich's and the wand connected to him perfectly. Harry couldn't decide which wand he liked more. The feeling of connection was different between the two, but so was the level of power he could sense in the wands. The final result was a beautiful wand where the light brown colour of the cypress wood at the end seemed to slide into the darker brown of the lignum vitae near the handle. The wood was merged like the woods had been smelted into each other and it was 12½ inches long, slightly longer than his other wand.

He visited the goblins with his uncle, to get his pendant enchanted and Remus to make the appointment for the warding of the property in Knockturn. He could choose from an entire array of enchantments, but was warned against coupling the various protection ones so he just got them enchanted to inform him if something he was about to eat had any foreign substances in it. He had the goblins put an

Unbreakable Charm and an Anti-Removal Charm on the leather cord, so that only he could remove the Ankh.

He also finished his business as Lord Potter at Gringotts, for which he didn't have time during the previous visit. He had Dumbledore removed from the stewardship of the Potter seat in the Wizengamot since he was no longer his magical guardian and placed the seat under NOTA-vote (none of the above). He left Sharptooth in charge of the investments, seeing as he was doing a good job at it and didn't have much else to arrange. He visited the family vault and found a few things of interest like several more photo albums, books on ancient and rare magics, a couple of beautiful ritual daggers and a beautiful black 'Steinway & Sons' grand piano. He planned on taking piano lessons the next summer so he could play on it and reminded himself to start learning how to read music notations. He took only the photo albums with him, but remembered the other things for later once he could play the piano and was familiar enough with runes and the concept of rituals.

He picked up 'The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection' by Quentin Trimble at Flourish & Blotts and reminded himself that he still needed to read 'Magical Theory' by Albert Waffling from the first-year booklist. Also the strange looking book he had encountered in the bookshop of Diagon called 'The Legend of Magic' still hadn't been opened yet, mainly because it didn't fit any subject of magic but was more about magical in general. He would read them both when at Hogwarts, because he and Remus would be busy enough the coming month with the furnishings and design of the new pub. They would never get it finished of course in just one month, but Remus said that Harry, as the majority shareholder, should have a say in the layout of his business.

'Magical Theory' and 'The Legend of Magic' were put aside for now because it required focus and concentration to study so Harry just browsed other books for leisure. Books like 'An Appraisal of Magical Education in Europe' and 'The Tales of Beedle the Bard' were interesting enough to keep his attention during the evenings but even Harry couldn't bring himself to study after a hard day of construction and planning. The month passed fairly quickly throughout their construction work and all too soon it was August 31st, and Harry would board the Hogwarts Express tomorrow.

Hogwarts Express

It was September 1st, 1991 and Harry Potter stood watching the entrance to King's Cross. He found it amusing to see how many Muggle-borns or half-bloods were clumsily strolling with their trunks and pets towards the trolleys. He had refrained from taking Hedwig to Hogwarts, reasoning he could just use the owls in the Owlery at Hogwarts, much to Hedwig's displeasure. This way, Remus would still be able to keep in touch without going to the post office every time he needed to send a letter. His own trunk was shrunk in his pocket by Remus, even though his uncle was doubtful that Harry could enlarge it himself on his first try. Harry replied that he would just ask one of the older students to do it for him if he wasn't able to. He smiled as he remembered his uncle's grumpy state from this morning....

Remus had tried to dose him again with Sleeping Draught, but as soon as Harry picked up his hot chocolate, his ankh was starting to warm up. Harry decided to let his uncle sweat in his attempt at dosing him once again and found something to do every time he was about to take a sip. He asked Remus how they were going to King's Cross Station in the morning, remembered that he had to check if he had everything in his trunk, had to go to the bathroom, etcetera. When he said he was going to lay about his clothes for the next day, Remus just said with a sigh, "Let me guess, you know...."

He nodded with a smile and continued with rereading 'Hogwarts, A History' for the next day.

The next morning, Harry woke Remus at half past seven, being ready with his morning exercises, shower and breakfast. He was immaculately dressed, his hair partially tamed and his trunk was packed with a few last minute additions, which were the books about learning how to read music. His uncle moaned when Harry tried to wake him, saying the train didn't leave for another three hours at least and tried to go back to sleep. Harry, having the ultimate remedy for this situation, just said some gibberish in Parseltongue and Remus shot up like a spear. Ever since he had set a completely harmless grass snake on his uncle at Potter Manor, he was very afraid of Harry's ability to speak the language of snakes.

And so here they were, almost an hour early at King's Cross and taking in the sights. Families with students going to Hogwarts were

milling about with their belongings and pets through the late rush hour. Remus had told Harry about the portal between platform nine and ten to get to platform Nine-and-three-quarters and they were walking towards it through the crowd.

"Okay Harry, this is it. Just walk through the barrier and watch out that you're not seen by any of these Muggles." Remus explained, pointing towards a brick wall.

Harry looked at the totally normal appearing wall, shrugged and started walking towards it. He closed his eyes when it seemed he was going to walk right into it until... he slammed head first against the wall and fell back on his ass.

He looked towards his uncle only to find him rolling on the floor, howling with laughter.

"It's the wall on the other side of the platform, isn't it?" Harry asked rhetorically.

Remus didn't answer; for he was too busy laughing at his gullible nephew.

Harry just shook his head, hard to believe his own stupidity in trusting his uncle in such an opportunity. Over the years, he found out the hard way that Remus was a vital part of the infamous prankster group at Hogwarts known as 'the marauders'. It was a sign of carelessness that Harry fell for something as obvious as this. In the house, they had set up rules to prevent things like this, for after a while Harry became so vigilant that he wouldn't drink anything but water directly from the tap. He looked to the other side and saw a wizarding family disappear into the wall that was obviously the real portal to get to platform 9¾.

Harry just left his uncle behind and walked towards the barrier; not knowing how much time would pass if he let Remus revel in his successful prank by rubbing his forehead. He passed through the wall and gasped as he saw the Hogwarts Express for the first time in his life.

It was a red and gold steam train that seemed majestic and antique at the same time. Harry was slightly disgusted by it however, since he had found yet another form of prejudice in the Wizarding World.

Remus had told him of the bias against Slytherin House and the esteem of Gryffindor House and the train was just another example. Remus entered the platform and saw his nephew looking with amazement towards the Express.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" He spoke.

"It is. However, you do realize that the train is just another form of house prejudice. Let me guess, our esteemed Headmaster was an avid Gryffindor?" Harry mentioned to his uncle.

"Hmm, you're correct, as usual." Remus said with a thoughtful look. "Well I guess this is it. Please be careful and don't get caught breaking any rules. And remember, if the headmaster doesn't give you your father's cloak before Christmas, ask him about it." Remus said as he hugged his nephew goodbye.

Harry spoke in an equally emotional tone. "I will. Thank you..... for everything, Remus. I'll see you again for the Christmas holidays and hopefully I'll have the cloak with me."

Harry stepped on the train, even though it was still fifteen minutes before departure time and waved towards Remus. As someone else stepped on the train after him, Harry removed his custom wand, pointed it inconspicuously towards his uncle while waving and spoke softly, "Muto Coloro Roseus" while performing the necessary wand movements meticulously. An indignant cry from Remus together with laughter coming from the entire platform told him he'd had been successful in changing his uncle's robes pink. Harry was rather proud of himself, it was the first time he had performed wand-based magic and he successfully did the Colour Change Charm on his first try. He knew that the Hogwarts Express was considered part of Hogwarts and, as such, would be exempt from the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery. He heard the laughter from his prank all the way to the empty compartment he chose to sit in about halfway down the train.

He sat down in the compartment and watched through the window as parents said goodbye to their children and pushed them towards the train. Harry noticed Neville Longbottom striding through the crowd of waving and pointing parents with his grandmother. The regal-looking, old woman was pushing her charge forward and ignoring the gaggle of fans. She obviously wanted nothing to do with

his fame but Neville still managed to stop every now and then for an autograph, lavishing in the attention. Behind Neville, a family of redheads emerged from the barrier with only a couple of minutes to go before the train left, they said a quick goodbye and Harry noticed the mother speaking a few last words to her youngest son while pointing towards Neville. He noticed the daughter, probably the youngest child, was staring at the Boy-Who-Lived with an adoring and, to Harry at least, slightly disturbing look.

Putting the thought out of his mind, he looked towards the door of his compartment that had just slid open. A young girl, probably a first year as well but shorter than Harry since he was tall for his age, entered the compartment and sat down on the couch opposite of him. She had long hair that was black as night and contrasted with her pale skin, a small nose and full lips. Together with her dark blue eyes she was quite pretty and would be a bombshell as she grew older. Harry had looked away before she thought he was staring and introduced himself after making eye contact.

"Hello, my name is Harry." He didn't hold out his hands, since that was an act of friendship and alliance in the old pureblood customs but kept a welcoming smile on his face and refrained from saying his surname.

The girl obviously recognized the greeting and what it stood for, for she replied equally friendly and non-assuming. "I'm Blaise, it's nice to meet you."

Harry didn't know what else to say, since he didn't have much contact with others of his age, so he kept quiet. He noticed that the train took off at that moment and decided to read for a while. He moved sideways, placed his shrunken trunk on the couch beside him and removed his custom wand from his wrist holster. He realized the action might seem a bit threatening even if he was just a first-year so he decided to clarify. "I'm just going to try an Engorgement Charm but I don't know if it'll work so don't laugh if it doesn't, alright?"

Blaise nodded thoughtfully but didn't say anything.

Harry muttered "Engorgio" and performed the right wand movement, or so he thought because nothing happened. He went to try again

but a soft hand on his arm stopped him. He looked towards Blaise and saw that she had her wand out as well.

She motioned towards the trunk, "May I?"

Harry nodded, not in the least bit jealous if she did it since he was eager to see what he did wrong. "Please, go ahead."

Blaise tapped the small trunk with her wand and said "Finite". The trunk returned to its former size immediately and Blaise put her wand back in her holster and stared back at him victoriously.

Harry slapped himself and smiled gratefully and a bit sheepishly towards his companion. "Thank you," he said. He should have remembered that "Finite" would return a shrunken trunk back to their former size and was much easier to do than an Engorgement Charm. 'Engorgio' was the countercharm to the Shrinking Charm 'Reducio' but a simple 'Finite', with the intention to end the charm, would usually dispel the last performed magic on an item or person. He realized that his uncle had known this and was probably cackling with laughter once again as he thought about Harry's Engorgement Charm.

He grabbed the book 'Magical theory' out of the main compartment of the trunk, the one with nearly all his first-year things so he could open it safely in front of others, and placed the trunk in the rack above him. He motioned to the book at Blaise, signaling that he was going to read and she did the same only with the first-year transfiguration text.

Their readings were interrupted when the door slid open with a bang and a rather short blonde boy with a pointed, aristocratic face barged into the compartment and looked around. He held his face up high and looked down at them. Two thuggish boys came in after him and tried to look menacing, they seemed to serve as bodyguards for the snobbish kid.

"Have any of you seen Longbottom? I heard he was on this cart, are you him?" The blonde, aristocratic boy looked pointedly at Harry.

Harry just shook his head, not trusting himself to say anything lest he made enemies even before he arrived at Hogwarts.

"What's the matter, can't speak? Don't you know who I am?" He looked at Harry's Muggle clothes. "You're probably a mudblood, it's disgusting the filth they allow at Hogwarts these days...."

Harry held his mouth shut, but he was itching to try out some of the curses and jinxes he had read about. He didn't know what the boy was trying to achieve with speaking down to him, perhaps aiming to intimidate Harry, so he just kept silent.

The boy left as quickly as he came in, after receive no response whatsoever, which is probably what he was looking for. Harry looked towards Blaise, who stared back at him and he just shook his head, amused by the antics of snobbish, pureblood, eleven-year-old elitists. Blaise seemed to find it equally amusing and chuckled at Harry's response; she looked at him appraisingly and stuck out her small hand.

"If that's the way you react towards Malfoy, than you might be worth my friendship. I'm Blaise Zabini." She said.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Zabini. I am Harry Potter." He gently grabbed her small hand, softly turned it over and lightly kissed the back of it in the pureblood custom of introduction.

She blushed lightly and startled at his name. "Potter? I'm surprised you didn't start a duel just now. Weren't your parents both Gryffindors?"

Harry stiffened at the usage of the 'past tense' and the mention of his parents but quickly recovered when he realized she was talking about their former designated house while they were both at Hogwarts. "They were, however I don't see how their history at school is of any influence to my reaction towards a pureblood elitist." Harry replied.

"You're right. However the designated house of a parent CAN predict the personality of the child, since the houses are based upon characteristics and it's possible to assume that a parent raises their child by their own morals and standards." Blaise explained.

"So you're saying that every person in a Hogwarts house, sorted in that house at the age of eleven, has the same morals and standards not only at that time, but also for the rest of their lives? Or at least

fifteen years later?" Harry asked in discussion.

"You have a point. However you do realize that the former Hogwarts house of a parent can define some of the characteristics of that person and they can pass that along to their child?"

Blaise asked for clarification.

"I realize that. On the other hand, it is equally possible that the child learns from their parents faults, develops completely different characteristics or even renounces their beliefs. Thus, making it just a matter of chance with perhaps a slightly larger probability for your conclusion." Harry argued and gave in to some extent.

Blaise smiled victoriously at winning yet another time over him until Harry dropped the bomb on the conversation.

"But this is all under the assumption that the parents are present to raise their child...."

"Oh," Blaise said dumbly, not knowing how to reply to such a statement.

"I..... I'm sorry." She continued after the silence became uncomfortable.

"That's alright, you obviously didn't know." Harry tried to smile reassuringly towards his travel companion.

The rest of the train ride continued in comfortable silence, only briefly disrupted by the 'food cart lady'. Harry bought several cauldron cakes and chocolate frogs, both for stilling his hunger and to offer Blaise something. A slight motion with his hand in a 'help yourself' kind of gesture and she took two chocolate frogs, thanking him quietly and carrying on with reading.

Harry saw many students walking up and down the train during the trip to glance at the Boy-Who-Lived who was probably only a few compartments away from him and Blaise. When the train started to slow down, a voice called down the train that they had to change into their robes since they would be arriving at Hogwarts in ten minutes time. Harry left the compartment shortly for Blaise to get

changed and returned quickly after, took off his jacket and pulled on his robes over his Muggle outfit.

The twosome moved off the train and followed the rest of the first years towards a huge man with a thick accent and a bushy beard. He was calling all the first year students together next to the beginning of a path that ran down to the lake, while the older students moved in the direction of several carriages on the other side of Hogsmeade station.

The enormous man, who could be over ten feet tall, was still calling for "Firs' years, Firs' years this way please" while every starting student was already in front of him. When he finally noticed that he had everyone together, he introduced himself. "Ello everyone, name's Hagrid, Rubeus Hagrid, but everyone jus' call me 'Hagrid'. C'mon, follow me – any more firs' years? Mind yer step, now!" He motioned everyone to keep following him down the steep, narrow path towards a fleet of small boats sitting in the water by the shore.

"No more'n four to a boat!" Hagrid called and Harry and Blaise climbed in a boat together while a pair of twins followed after them.

"Everyone in?" shouted Hagrid, who had a boat to himself. "Right then, Forward!"

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake, which was serenely calm with the surface of the water as smooth as a mirror. There was a loud "Ooooooh" as the castle of Hogwarts came into view. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side of the lake was a vast castle with many towers and turrets, illuminated from within and lighting up the windows of the castle. The half full moon in the sky above covered the castle in an ethereal glow, making it seem even more surreal and magical. It was clear to Harry why they brought the first-years this way with a first impression of the school such as this.

Harry thought he saw unnatural rippling in the surface of the water up ahead and looked down the boat to see if there was any marine life visible in the dark, shallow water. To his astonishment, he saw giant tentacles holding the boats from below, moving the boats forward towards their destination. He tapped Blaise on her shoulder and pointed next to the boat. She looked and shrieked as she saw what was below the surface.

Hagrid understood her reaction and explained to everyone in a loud voice. "Tha's jus' the giant squid; she 'elps the boats along every year an' won't hurt yeh."

Harry was intrigued that a marine animal could be so well trained and kept in an environment around children. He gently stroked the tentacle in the water below their boat in appreciation and received a tickling brush above the water in return. Blaise hit his shoulder in mock anger and shook her head amusedly when he looked at her questioningly.

The boats entered a dark tunnel where they had to bend their heads down for a moment and arrived at an underground harbour. They climbed onto the wooden docks and followed Hagrid up a flight of steps to a huge, oak door. Hagrid knocked three times with his fists that might have reverberated around the entire castle and the doors opened to a tall black-haired witch in emerald green-robcs and a black pointed hat. Professor Minerva McGonagall, head of Gryffindor house, Deputy Headmistress and Transfiguration professor, if Harry was not mistaken. She looked like she was not one to cross, but after hearing about her soft spot for the Marauders; he knew it was just an act to keep everyone in line.

"The firs' years, Professor McGonagall," said Hagrid.

"Thank you, Hagrid. I will take them from here."

The professor opened the door and motioned the new student inside where they entered the Entrance hall. It was enormous, even larger than a house in suburbs, with torches lining the stone walls and had a ceiling too high to make out. A marble staircase facing towards them led to the upper floors and, if Harry believed his uncle at least, had a trick step on the seventh tread of the second stairs around the corner.

Harry was drawn from his inspection by the slamming of the door behind them and he saw Professor McGonagall moving to the front.

"Welcome to Hogwarts. The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. Your house represents your family during your

stay here and you will have classes with them, sleep in the house dormitory and spend free time in your house common room."

Harry, recognizing the speech as a memorized one, decided to intervene to start his breaking of prejudices in the Wizarding World.

"Excuse me professor. Are you saying that we can't spend our free time in one of the other common rooms? If so, then where will we meet up with people from other houses then? Are there any common places for promoting the inter-house relationships?"

"Not that I'm aware of, mister....?" McGonagall replied.

"Potter ma'am, Harry Potter. Nice to meet you, Professor McGonagall," Harry filled in.

"It is nice to meet you too, Mr. Potter." Harry swore he saw a small smile on her face, signaling he had broken through her hard exterior already. "Now, as I was saying before," here she glared mockingly at him and Harry just smiled his lopsided grin in return, the one his uncle said was 'James Potter 1-0-1'. "... the four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin. Each house had its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your house points, while any rule-breaking," here she flicked her stern eyes briefly to Harry, "...will lose house points. At the end of the year, the house with the most points is awarded the house cup, which is a great honor to achieve. I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours."

"The Sorting Ceremony will commence in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school. I suggest you take that time to smarten yourselves up as much as you can while you are waiting." Here she looked towards the redheaded boy who had kept close to the Boy-Who-Lived ever since Harry saw them on platform 9¾ and Harry noticed his ruffled robes and brown smudged nose.

Harry raised himself up high, determined to enter the hall with confidence and nobility. He heard people discussing what the Sorting Ceremony would entail and barely managed to keep his snort back when he heard a mention of 'fighting a troll'. One girl with bushy brown hair, large front teeth and a book held to her chest was reciting all the spells she had read about. Remus wouldn't tell him

how exactly they were sorted but Harry did manage to pry information about it from his uncle and was told that it was something that defined or read your characteristics.

He was surprised by the Hogwarts ghosts who paid a visit to the new first-years. He had never seen a ghost before and found them immensely interesting after all the stories he had heard about the way the Marauders befriended most of the ghosts for information and knowledge. They served the Headmaster as a part of Hogwarts but were the rumor mill of the castle and had once lived as witches and wizards, therefore had knowledge of old magic.

The definition of old magic was used very widely by Harry, for he realized everything what those two words entailed. They would know of rituals, spells and items that are no longer in use, not mentioned anymore in literature or even outlawed since then by the Ministry of Magic. They would be the ultimate teachers and all you had to do for acquiring that knowledge was to receive their acceptance and friendship. Also, the ghosts would know Hogwarts like no other and thus had invaluable information for Harry.

The doors through which the professor had disappeared opened and McGonagall entered the entrance hall once again. No one but Harry and Blaise had noticed it since everyone was still in awe or in conversation with the four house ghosts. McGonagall smiled briefly when she saw Harry looking at her, but it disappeared when she spoke up.

"Move along now!" Everyone but the twosome jumped at the sharp voice in surprise. "The Sorting Ceremony is about to start. Form a line and enter the Great Hall in an orderly fashion."

They did as told and entered the hall after one another. Harry thought it looked awe-inspiring with all the candles floating in the air, four tables next to each other along the hall, the staff table in front of everyone and the enchanted ceiling looking like the sky outside. He heard the girl with the bushy hair lecturing that she had read about it in 'Hogwarts, A History'. The other students and staff already seated were watching the new first-years and speculating where they would be sorted. It was exactly as he had read about in 'Hogwarts, A History' like the girl said but the book just didn't do it justice, it was magical.

In front of everyone, between the house tables and the staff table, Professor McGonagall placed a four-legged stool in the middle of the Great Hall. On top of the stool she put a pointed, patched, slightly frayed and extremely dirty wizard's hat. Everyone was staring at the hat and suddenly a rip near the brim opened wide like a mouth and the thing started to sing!

"Oh, you may not think I'm pretty,

But don't judge on what you see,

I'll eat myself if you can find

A smarter hat than me.

You can keep your bowlers black,

Your top hats sleek and tall,

For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat

And I can cap them all.

There's nothing hidden in your head

The Sorting Hat can't see,

So try me on and I will tell you

Where you ought to be.

You might belong in Gryffindor,

Where dwell the brave at heart,

Their daring, nerve, and chivalry

Set Gryffindors apart;

You might belong in Hufflepuff,

Where they are just and loyal,

Those patient Hufflepuffs are true
And unafraid of toil;
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,
if you've a ready mind,
Where those of wit and learning,
Will always find their kind;
Or perhaps in Slytherin
You'll make your real friends,
Those cunning folk use any means
To achieve their ends.
So put me on! Don't be afraid!
And don't get in a flap!
You're in safe hands (though I have none)
For I'm a Thinking Cap!"

The whole hall burst into applause as the hat finished its song. It bowed to each of the four tables and then became still once more. Harry realized he had nothing to fear from this kind of sorting and would just have his most apparent characteristics determine which house he went to. He tried to guess what his house would be, but reckoned he could be placed anywhere.

Professor McGonagall now stepped forward holding a long roll of parchment.

"When I call out your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool to be sorted," she said.

"Abbott, Hannah!"

A pink-faced girl with blonde pigtails stumbled out of the line, put on the hat, which fell right down over her eyes, and sat down. A moment pause -

"Hufflepuff!" shouted the hat.

Sometimes the sorting took a bit longer for the hat to shout out a house and Harry reckoned that it was because of them matching the description of more than one house. When "Longbottom, Neville" was called, the boy strutted through the remaining first-years and the Great Hall erupted in whispers as they all got to watch the Boy-Who-Lived get sorted.

This sorting was obviously the longest until now and Harry found it amusing to see a look of panic appear every now and then on Neville's face. When the hat finally shouted "Gryffindor!", he saw both Neville and Dumbledore sigh in relief and Harry had the suspicion that the headmaster was listening in on the Boy-Who-Lived's sorting process. The Gryffindor table gave a loud applause of approval and the sorting resumed. Malfoy was sorted into Slytherin while the hat had barely touched his head and finally, it was Harry's turn with "Potter, Harry".

He walked confidently towards the stool, put the hat on his head and sat down. He felt a wavelike feeling against his Occlumency force field and strengthened the power flowing through it. After a minute of probing against his shield, the hat spoke up for all the occupants of the Great Hall to hear.

"Would you please lower your Occlumency shields, Mr. Potter?"

The hall erupted with whispers as the students who knew what Occlumency was gasped and explained it to the other. Harry lowered the force field around his library/mind only and heard a voice speaking to him inside his head. "I'm surprised Mr. Potter. That is the first time a first-year managed to keep me out with their Occlumency shields even though many pureblood families teach their children rudimentary Occlumency skills. Not many adult wizards can even manage such a feat though I don't often scan the minds of adults but your shield is quite unique."

"Will you read my mind? Learn my secrets, my education, goals and everything I want to do?" Harry asked the hat in a panicked voice.

"Yes, I can read everything inside your mind right now. But have no fear, your ancestor, Godric Gryffindor, placed secrecy oaths on me so that I can never tell another about what I find inside the mind of students." The hat replied and Harry released the breath he didn't know he was holding. He didn't want the headmaster knowing what was in his mind; he had too many things to keep hidden and the idea alone sent a chill down his spine. He remembered the sigh of relief Dumbledore gave when Neville Longbottom was sorted into Gryffindor and felt the hat respond to his thought.

"You are partially correct. He wasn't listening in on the sorting, since that is impossible but he had expressed a preference for placing the Boy-Who-Lived in the house of the lions. I shouldn't be telling you this but since he wasn't wearing me on his head at the time, the secrecy oath doesn't apply. He also expressed the same preference for you, though to a lesser extent." The hat mentioned casually, too casually.

"Me? Why would he be so interested in me? I'm not the Boy-Who-Lived; he didn't even know I was aware of the Wizarding World until he was suspended as steward of the Potter seat in the Wizengamot." Harry asked confused about his affiliation to the Boy-Who-Lived.

"I'm sorry but I cannot answer that. Shall we continue with the sorting, it seems the students are becoming impatient? You are an heir to Godric, so you can demand of me to be sorted in his house or I could sort you normally, depending on your choice." The hat explained patiently.

"Please sort me as you do with all the students," Harry replied.

"Very well, you are certainly not foolishly brave enough for his house. You are loyal to those who have earned it, but in no way is your loyalty sufficient for Hufflepuff. You are incredibly intelligent and have a talent for magic almost unprecedented so Ravenclaw is definitely an option. You are also very ambitious and have several goals worthy of a Slytherin, you would do well in the house of the snakes, and you could become great there....." The hat seemed to trail off, looking for a response from Harry but not receiving any. Aside from Gryffindor as a rebellion to the headmaster, he didn't care where he was sorted.

"Very well, I have made my choice. I'm looking forward to your time here at Hogwarts Mr. Potter. You can have a great influence on the Wizarding World with your goals and moral standards. Seeing as you hold knowledge and intelligence as your greatest goal in life, I wish you the best of luck in...."

Is this a fake cliffhanger or what?

The First Week at Hogwarts, part 1

"Ravenclaw!"

"Thank you." Harry replied politely. He took the hat off of his head and put it on the stool for the next person to be sorted. The Ravenclaw table was still giving the polite applause of approval and as Harry walked towards it, he reckoned that he would receive an I-told-you-so letter from his uncle.

When Harry asked his uncle if both his parents would be okay with him being placed in Slytherin, Remus started laughing. He replied that he would be willing to bet money on him being sorted into Ravenclaw, parselmouth or not....

'It seems he was correct,' Harry thought with a smile as he sat down and watched the rest of the sorting. When "Weasley, Ronald" was called, Harry recognized the redhead from platform 9¾ and slapped himself on the forehead. 'So this was a Weasley.... That must make those twins Weasleys as well.' Harry considered. Remus had told him of the redheaded Weasley family, who were particularly loyal to Dumbledore and well-known as a Light family. They were poor in the means of money, but had a lot of children and as such a large family which was what Remus considered true wealth.

When "Zabini, Blaise" was called as the final student to be sorted, Harry snapped back to attention and made eye contact with her as she sat on the stool. Harry gave a reassuring nod, recognizing her nervousness and watched as she closed her eyes to be sorted. He saw her shake negatively every now and then but finally the hat shouted "Slytherin!" for all to hear and Harry saw Blaise droop slightly in disappointment. She took the hat off and walked towards an empty seat at the applauding Slytherin table. When she walked between the tables of Slytherin and Ravenclaw past Harry, he whispered quietly so her fellow house students wouldn't hear, "I'm still your friend if you want me to be Blaise, nothing has changed that." He saw her smile slightly and nod faintly, sit down on the bench and introduce herself to the other female first-year Slytherins.

When the stool and hat was set aside and McGonagall was seated at the staff table, Dumbledore got up to his feet, spread his arms wide open in gesture and spoke up.

"Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts! Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!... Thank you!"

Harry shook his head and clapped politely with the entire hall. The man clapped once and waved his hand in a gesture as if he covered the hall with something and then sat down. The food appeared in front of the students and everyone in the Hall gasped, whether in delight for the various dishes or the image Dumbledore gave that he made the food appear. Harry supposed the headmaster portrayed the image of an old, mad wizard for his reputation so that no-one would suspect him as a master of manipulations. Ever since his sorting, he had thought about why the headmaster would want him placed in Gryffindor but he couldn't come up with a reason.

As he munched on his dinner, the other first-years started to introduce themselves around him. He memorized the names together with their faces and decided he would reserve judgment for now because he never believed in first impressions. Everyone talked about their history and ancestry but Harry himself just introduced himself as "Harry Potter, I was raised in the Muggle world."

There was Terry Boot, a Muggle-born with brown hair who was still in awe of everything; Anthony Goldstein, a blond pureblood obviously from a light-sided family, spouting things about dark wizards in Slytherin; Michael Corner, a half-blood sheep as Remus liked to call them for he was hanging on every word of Goldstein; Stephen Cornfoot, a pureblood with slightly longer brown hair of yet unknown allegiance and then there was Kevin Entwhistle, a blond-haired quiet boy, well-kempt and obviously Muggle-born. He was interesting as he asked Harry several things about magic and what kind of life magical children before the age of eleven had but did not seem that obtrusive. Harry could see himself befriending the boy but Blaise would come first, since she was his first friend.

Of the girls in his year there was Lisa Turpin, a pureblood, pretty girl with long blond hair and blue eyes; Padma Patil, a black-haired, pureblood Indian girl who had an identical twin in Gryffindor; Mandy Brocklehurst, a boyish, half-blood girl with short dark brown hair; Su Li, a Chinese, half-blood girl with short black hair and a childish face. She was sitting next to a slightly older Chinese student who was very pretty with long black hair and Harry thought they might be related, not siblings but cousins perhaps. Then there was Morag

MacDougal, a pureblood girl with freckles, blue eyes and long, dark brown hair with a reddish tint. She was the prettiest girl in Ravenclaw in his year according to Harry but she looked intimidating, like saying 'look, but don't touch'.

Dinner gave way to dessert and Harry enjoyed his treacle tart during a Quidditch conversation between Michael, Anthony and Terry. Halfway into the discussion, the house ghosts appeared in the Great Hall by rising up through the tables. The Grey Lady only introduced herself as the Ravenclaw ghost and said hello to the new house members before floating away through a wall. When dessert was finished, Dumbledore rose once more and spoke up for the start-of-term speech.

"Now that we're all fed and watered, I just have a few notices to give you and then you can retire to your common rooms. First-years should note that the Forbidden Forest is forbidden to all students. A few of our older students would do well to remember that." Harry noted that Dumbledore's twinkling eyes flashed towards the Gryffindor table where the Weasley twin were sitting.

"I have also been asked by Mr. Filch, the caretaker, to remind you all that no magic should be used between classes in the corridors. Quidditch tryouts will be held in the second week of term. Anyone interested in playing for their house teams should contact Madam Hooch." Harry had decided that with the ban on bringing your own broom in first year, he wouldn't try out even though he might be able to make the selection with a school broom. His desire to learn as much magic as he could would have a setback since there was just too much to get started on in first year.

Dumbledore continued, "And finally, I must tell you that this year, the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death."

A few persons chuckled, but Harry found it very suspicious that the headmaster seemed to glance at Neville Longbottom as he said this. It might have been just the foolish bravery and recklessness of Gryffindors but Harry was still feeling wary of the headmaster.

"Now, please follow your house prefects back to your common rooms, first-years should pay attention to where they are going to

avoid getting lost in the future. The castle has a way of doing that to people," he finished with a chuckle. "Good night."

Everybody in the Great Hall stood up and first-years of every house were called to their prefects near the entrance doors. Harry brushed past the students and arrived with the rest of the first-years at the male and female fifth-year prefects. He waved goodbye to Blaise who left with the rest of the Slytherins and exited the Great Hall, climbing the stairs towards the Ravenclaw tower. On their way, they passed several portraits that made tempting comments about the new first-years and one female among them even mentioned to Harry how cute he was. Harry, of course recognizing that these portraits had the same value as ghosts, gave a gentleman's bow and thanked her for the compliment.

The entrance to the Ravenclaw common room was close to the library which suited Harry just fine. It was a wooden door with a bronze eagle door knocker that seemed to come alive as the students approached.

"For me to allow you entrance to this room, you must correctly answer the question I ask. 'What is so fragile that when you speak its name you break it?'" The eagle spoke and asked them the question to open.

"Silence, the answer is silence." Harry spoke up.

"You may enter," it replied in return and swung open.

The prefects both seemed surprised to have a first-year answer the door so confidently but Harry just shrugged and followed them in.

The common room was a beautifully decorated and spacious room, with a domelike ceiling and arched windows providing plenty of daylight during the morning and afternoon. The windows were framed with blue curtains and a midnight-blue carpet covered the floor, matching it to the standard Ravenclaw colours. The room was circular in shape, with several stairs leading up to the student dorms, a statue of Rowena Ravenclaw near the entrance and even a small library to educate the house of the intelligent.

"Wow," Harry breathed.

"Wow is correct. As you've just seen, the entrance door has to be answered to gain access to the common room. Ravenclaw house is known as the house of the intelligent and as such, it is expected that you can answer the riddles and tests of knowledge it provides. If you don't know the answer, you won't gain entry. You can always wait for someone who does, check the library down the corridor for any Ravenclaw students or ask Professor Flitwick, our head of house, whose office is just past the library." The prefect explained.

"The first-year dorms are the up those stairs, girls on the left and boys on the right and the older students are further down the corridors. The dorms are designed to suit our needs, studying often happens there so keep the noise down. The common room is mainly for interaction and relaxation, but it is possible that students are reading here as well, so don't blow things up."

"As this is the house of the intelligent, there are mandatory study sessions that take place once a week for every year. First through fourth year study with the fifth years to revise for their O.W.L.'s and upper years do so with the seventh years for their N.E.W.T.'s. First year study sessions take place on Wednesday nights, before your evening Astronomy lessons. If you'll be absent, please inform a prefect or Professor Flitwick with the reason, so we know you aren't failing your classes."

The male prefect led the boys up to the dorm and the female prefect took the girls up the other stairs. They were told that male students couldn't enter the girl dorms, but reverse was possible and Harry raised an eyebrow at that. He remembered all too well that for the last two summers of soccer, the older female players had tried to peep on him in the showers. He wasn't embarrassed by the arrangements here at Hogwarts, but come on... Hadn't these incompetent wizards ever heard of female perverts?

His dorm was perfect, or at least as good as it could be for a shared room. There was a desk next to every four poster bed, with a shelf above it for their books. Harry considered he would place his first-year books there, but would keep the rest safely in the trunk. The bed was comfy enough with a soft mattress and blue curtains to keep out the light in the morning. He lugged his trunk next to a bed near one of the windows and claimed possession of the last bed on the right, which was farthest away from the entrance to the dorm. He placed some of his robes and other clothes in the cabinet next to the

desk, but kept most of them safe in his trunk. Paranoid wasn't what Harry was going for, but vigilance never hurt anybody and he had been raised by a former Marauder.

He took out 'The Standard Book of Spells, grade 2' and sat on his bed. He noticed everybody else was getting ready for bed, but he wasn't tired yet so he would try out the Engorgement Charm once more. It was the first day he was allowed to perform wand magic and he would put it to good use. The Engorgement Charm was just a single spell he wanted to be able to do and then he would start at the beginning in 'The Standard Book of Spells, grade 1'. The charm wasn't that complicated he remembered, but he wasn't sure what he had done wrong. The book wasn't any help to discovering that and Harry thought of his 'secrets' book, where he had read about the secret of charms. "The willing part.... Damn!" He breathed softly. He stared at his socks that he had kicked off and performed the charm again with his custom wand and the desire to make them larger.

The sock grew big enough to become a sleeping bag and Harry cheered silently. This was his second correctly performed charm. He had deliberated to only use his custom wand at Hogwarts, which he would show amongst others as 'his wand' and keep his other wand a well-kept secret for emergencies. He skipped through the book of spells, grade 2 and looked up the Shrinking Charm. He pointed his wand at the sleeping bag/sock and murmured softly "Reducio" while performing the necessary swipe and half circle counterclockwise. The sock returned to normal size and Harry smiled, he had done it, 'magic'. And with that thought he went to sleep, setting his alarm early for the next morning.

The next morning he woke up at 6am, breakfast would start at 7:00 and classes an hour and a half after that. He took out his exercise clothes and quickly brushed his teeth. He had asked Remus before coming here if it was possible to keep up with his morning workouts and his uncle told him to just do so outside, but had no solution for during the winter. And so, Harry was walking towards the Entrance Hall where he could exit to the grounds outside. He stumbled a bit with the stairways since they were moving, but with memorizing the way to the Ravenclaw tower yesterday and the stories from his uncle, he managed to reach the grounds just fine.

He stretched, jogged around the lake and did his push-ups and sit-ups on the grass. He had noticed that most of the boys his age were

slightly chubby or just plain fat, nowhere near the physique Harry had and he didn't want to become like that either. He could explore a bit this way and check out the sights. He quickly recognized Hagrid's hut, the Whomping Willow a bit further down the lake and saw some movements near the edge of the forest. It was still dawn, so he couldn't see exactly what it was but Harry could wait with magical creatures until he could somewhat defend himself.

He returned to the dorm for a shower and went down to breakfast with his Charms book to resume with yesterday's activities. His roommates had woken up and Kevin walked with him to the Great Hall.

They were almost the first to arrive, only some older Hufflepuffs were there and the bushy-haired one was sitting at the Gryffindor table. 'Hermione Granger', if Harry remembered correctly from the sorting. He decided to make friends with Kevin, and see if he could find out more about him after the small talk on the way to the Great Hall.

"So, Kevin Entwhistle, how did you take to being a wizard?" Harry asked as he scooped up his breakfast.

"It was alright I guess, not that much of a shock. Did some accidental magic when I was eight and realized I was different than everybody else. It wasn't until December last year that I found out exactly what it was, but I've pretty much always known it. I've always had a way with animals, you know." Kevin told in what he thought was obvious explanation.

"No, I don't know. What do you mean?"

"Well, I'm not sure how to explain this but I can just get animals to listen to me, I talk to them. They sense something in me, I don't know what it is but they know I have their best interest at heart. My family owns a breeding farm, you see. We breed pretty much every farm animal that exists in the Muggle world; Horses, cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, geese, ducks and even ostriches. Isn't it normal for a wizard to do that?" Kevin explained with obvious enthusiasm about animals.

"No. At least, not that I know of." Harry answered. "Remember, I was raised in the Muggle world, but from what my uncle has told me

and I've read, there nothing that describes what you're saying. It might be some kind of ability you have.... I'm not sure you want to tell that around to everybody, not until you know exactly what it is you can do."

"Yeah, you're right. Thanks.... I'll have to check the library for it," Kevin said with a thoughtful look.

"So you like animals? As in your hobby? Have you read about the elective in third year and above, Care of Magical Creatures?" Harry asked, determined to find some common ground with the boy.

"Yeah, it's my life. The elective was actually the reason I came to Hogwarts. When Professor McGonagall came to explain that I was a wizard, I was initially reluctant to leave the farm. It wasn't until she told me about the fact that there was an entire array of magical creatures, animals we had never seen before, that I agreed to go. She told me about the elective and some of what it entailed, I can't wait to take the class!"

"I know, I'm not as enthusiastic about it as you....." Harry smiled as Kevin looked slightly embarrassed, "... but I'm looking forward to the subject as well. Did you know that dragons really exist?"

It was amusing to see Kevin's eyes light up like a Christmas tree and Harry was pestered to tell him everything he knew of dragons, which wasn't much to Kevin's opinion. Professor Flitwick came by and introduced himself to Kevin, Harry had recognized him yesterday at the sorting because of his height, and gave them their class schedule. He explained that they had charms as their first class with the Slytherins during which he would get to know and talk to them all. When Kevin asked the tiny professor what he knew about dragons, he referred him to Hagrid and Kevin asked if Harry would come along to the 'giant man' this afternoon.

This started another discussion when Harry mentioned; "Giants are real, did you know? They're probably a part of the elective. NEWT level, I think."

"And Hagrid is one?" Kevin asked.

"I'm not sure; he isn't a real giant but he might have some giant blood in him." Harry replied, doubtfully and thoughtful.

When Kevin asked him how that could occur, Harry just gave him a look and Kevin immediately understood how it had happened.

Breakfast was nearly over and Harry had just heard the Boy-Who-Lived arrive in the Great Hall a few minutes ago. The whispers started up again....

"There, look."

"Where?"

"Next to the tall kid with the red hair."

"The chubby one?"

"Did you see his face?"

"Did you see the scar?"

Harry sighed, put his Charms book in his featherweight bag together with the other first-year books and motioned to Kevin that he was going to class, even though it was still fifteen minutes before it started. He waved to Blaise at the Slytherin table as he walked out of the Great Hall and towards the library, where the Charms classroom was supposed to be somewhere nearby. He reached his destination with over five minutes to spare but was the earliest arrival and he considered that the others must be lost a bit. He took a seat in the middle of the classroom, took out his custom wand and started practicing the spells mentioned in the Charms book. He was already at his fifth one when Professor Flitwick interrupted him, he hadn't heard the tiny man enter.

"Well done, Mr. Potter. It's been a long time since I've seen talent such as yours. Tell me, are these your first attempts at the charms?" Harry nodded. "Your mother was quite the genius at Charms herself. She might have even gained her mastery, had she not joined the Unspeakables."

"Is". Harry declared compellingly, wand still in his hand. "My mother IS quite the genius at Charms... And she CAN still gain her mastery if she wants to when she wakes up."

"Yes, yes, of course. I'm sorry, Mr. Potter. I'm aware of the situation, I didn't mean to imply...." Professor Flitwick said apologetically.

"It's okay. Just don't let it happen again," Harry said angrily. Students were starting to come in, so Harry forced himself to calm down and put his wand back in its holster.

Professor Flitwick nodded quickly and motioned people inside the room with a strained smile on his face. Blaise sat down next to Harry with an encouraging smile to which Harry suspected that she had been listening in outside the classroom. Her fellow Slytherins were surprised that she would voluntarily sit next to a Ravenclaw but shrugged, seeing as it wasn't a Gryffindor. Professor Flitwick climbed on top of a stack of books on his chair and started with the class.

"Good afternoon, I am Professor Flitwick. I'm the resident Charms Master here at Hogwarts and, as some of you already know, the Head of House Ravenclaw. For the Ravenclaws among you, my office is behind the door next to this classroom and you can come by at any time if you need anything or have any questions. I'll be interviewing you every semester in your first year to ask how you are doing here at Hogwarts and if you have any complaints."

"Now. This is your charms class, your first class of the year. Can anyone tell me exactly what charms are?"

The class continued this way with questions and Harry thought he would die of boredom. When they finally went to practice a charm, he realized it was the first one he had tried, the Coloring Charm and were given a piece of parchment for trying it out on. He considered telling the professor of his experience with this particular spell, and decided that a practical demonstration would be more impressive. He helped Blaise with the charm first and then went to work himself. It took a lot of "Muto Coloro Caeruleus" (blue) and "Muto Coloro Pyropus" (bronze), but at the end of the class, the entire room was filled by Ravenclaw colours with midnight-blue walls and bronze-coloured desks and chairs. He left the room with a chuckle, unaffected by the glares from the Slytherins and shaking of the head by a shocked Charms professor.

The next class was History of Magic with the Gryffindors and Harry got a good hour of sleep. He sat next to Kevin and prepared himself

by taking out his stationery for taking notes during the class. He was told about the ghost teacher by his uncle, together with his infamous teaching tone and so Harry had taken precautionary measures. When his eyelids started to droop during the first of many lectures to come about a goblin rebellion, he looked around and noticed nearly everyone sleeping. Only Lisa Turpin, Stephen Cornfoot and he of the Ravensclaws and Hermione Granger from Gryffindor were awake and taking notes. Harry rolled out a few feet of parchment, took a fancy quill out of his bag and tapped it once with his custom wand. The 'dicta-quill' began writing by itself and Harry settled down for a nice nap, unaware of the furious look from Hermione as she kept scribbling down her notes.

Harry left the History of Magic classroom with sleepy eyes but was well rested and headed to lunch with the rest of the entourage. He had already told Kevin that he could copy his notes for History if he wanted to and had attracted the attention of many other students who were asleep during the class. Harry realized that he had just made a lot of 'pseudo-friends' and decided that he would sacrifice his History of Magic notes for this. Blaise and Kevin got first call of course, but after that, they would be fair game.

After lunch, Harry walked down to the dungeons for Potions class together with the rest of the Ravensclaws and the Hufflepuff first-years. Harry knew he would be bored out of his mind during this class but was warned by his uncle of the rivalry between his father and the Potions teacher, Professor Severus Snape. Remus had been tightlipped about the topic and what role his mother played in it but Harry knew he had to be careful during the class if the rivalry was severe enough to get warned for by his uncle. They had to wait at the door to the Potions classroom and when everyone had arrived, the door swung open. A man with dark, greasy hair and black eyes appeared and said "In!"

The students stumbled inside the cold classroom as quickly as they could and Harry sat next to Kevin once more. He didn't really need an intelligent partner for this subject; he could pass his Potions O.W.L. with an E or higher and might even get an acceptable for his N.E.W.T. at this very moment. He got out his potions kit and stationery for taking notes and focussed on the teacher who started by taking roll call. He paused barely noticeable at 'Harry Potter' and, when he was finished with the names; started speaking in barely more than a whisper, but everyone heard him. The sense of

presence the man radiated was so oppressive that the entire classroom was as quiet as a mouse.

"You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potionmaking," he began. "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses..... I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory and even stopper death.... If you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach." (1)

"Potter!" Snape said suddenly after a moment of silence. "What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

"A sleeping potion so powerful it is known as the Draught of the Living Death, sir." Harry replied.

Snape seemed surprised that Harry knew the answer but recovered quickly and continued.

"Correct. Everybody can get lucky once, let's try again. Where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?" Snape asked.

"In your potions cupboard," Snape started to sneer, "or in the stomach of a goat if that's what you mean." Harry answered without disrespect. The other Ravenclaw started to look puzzled towards Harry.

"One more. What is the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

"There is no difference, sir. It is the same plant, also known as aconite." Harry said.

The Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs were looking at Harry in awe that he knew things that weren't even in the second-year books and Harry just shrugged. He had prepared, so what, everybody does that right?

"That is correct, Mr. Potter. Five points to Ravenclaw. It seems there is a reason you were placed in the house of the intelligent and I was mistaken about you." Snape apologized in not really an apology but a shocked silence followed the statement anyway.

"Well? Why aren't you all copying that down? For today, you will make the Boil-Cure Potion. The instructions are on the board", he flicked his wand towards it and the instruction became visible, "and your necessary ingredients are in the cupboard. At the end of the class, you will hand in a sample of your attempt, properly labeled and clean up your working station. Any questions?" Snape explained towards a silent and shuffling class, hurrying to get started.

Harry could do the potion with his eyes closed so he kept an eye on Kevin and his attempt at the potion. He was actually doing quite well and seemed to have some talent for the subject until he tried to add the porcupine quills before taking the cauldron off the fire. Harry stopped him and felt a presence in his mind moments later. He hastily added power to his always-up force-field but it wasn't really necessary, since the Legilimens attacker was momentarily lost in the dark mist around his mind and barely made a brush against his Occlumency shield after that. He made eye contact with Professor Snape, who seemed surprised by the action and Harry felt him withdraw his probe. It seemed he wasn't very talented at Legilimency, more so than Remus of course since that wasn't difficult, but nothing like he had expected or like the Sorting Hat the day before.

He finished his potion, labeled a sample for grading and brought it to the front, stepping over the mess of a molten cauldron. The Hufflepuff student, who was responsible for the mess of adding porcupine quills to the mixture before taking the cauldron off the fire, was taken to the infirmary, covered in boils. When he returned to his station, he scooped up the rest of his potion in two vials and placed them carefully in his bag. He reckoned he would place an Unbreakable Charm on them when he had the time for it and cleaned up any mess he and Kevin had made. They exited the class with a respectful nod towards the professor and to their surprise, he nodded back to them.

They walked towards the grounds via the Entrance Hall to visit Hagrid and Harry made a quick stop in an abandoned classroom on the way. He got both vials out and performed the Unbreakable

Charm with two taps, a leftwards stroke and drawing back of the wand while muttering 'Infragilis' with the desire to make the vial indestructible. The vial seemed to glow a light blue colour which meant Harry had done it correctly according to 'The Standard Book of Spells, Grade 4'. He had gotten all the grades of the book for working ahead in Charms and it seemed to become more and more useful. He picked up the vial and threw it towards the wall.

Kevin, who had been standing next to him the whole time with an awed look at seeing Harry perform such advanced magic, whispered "What the....." and the vial clinked against the stone wall, bouncing off of it and landing unharmed on the floor. Harry smiled, proud of performing yet another charm correctly and did the same with the other vial. He put them back in his bag and motioned Kevin to follow him towards the Entrance Hall and the grounds. Kevin was still gushing about Harry's display of magic when they arrived at Hagrid's hut. They knocked and waited politely for the door to be answered after hearing a dog bark wildly.

"Fang, be quiet!" They heard from inside and Kevin seemed to become more enthusiastic by the second in curiosity of finding out what kind of animal 'Fang' would be named after.

The door opened and Hagrid came immediately into view. "Ello, what c'n I do for yeh?"

"Hello Hagrid, I'm Harry Potter and this is Kevin Entwhistle. We were told by Professor Flitwick that you know a lot about dragons and shared Kevin's passion for animals....." Harry said when it became clear that Kevin wouldn't be able to speak for a while because of the gamekeeper's size.

"Yeh like dragons, do you? Come in then an' I'll tell yeh 'bout those beautiful creatures." Hagrid said and Kevin seemed to come out of his stupor when he saw 'Fang', the dog, walking towards him. The gamekeeper and Kevin seemed to connect on common ground immediately when Fang took a liking to the first-years and shared many stories about their passion. Kevin told Hagrid about the safari he went on in Africa and Hagrid told of his desire to raise a dragon. Harry was content to listen in and share his opinion when asked but mainly learned from the experience of Hagrid and made a request to see the Hippogriff and Thestral herd.

Hagrid invited them to come by anytime in the weekends and he would take them to see both animal groups. Kevin, eager for information about them, pestered Hagrid for every fact he knew about them from breeding, to herd size and living environments.

When it was time for dinner, Hagrid took them back to the castle and delivered them at the Ravenclaw table while he sat down at the staff table up front. Their fellow first-year Ravenclaws gathered around them and inquired where they had been during the afternoon. Kevin explained Professor Flitwick's advice for finding out about dragons and Hagrid's passion for magical creatures. Their housemates seemed disappointed to have missed such an educative afternoon but said nothing.

Harry met up with Blaise in the Hall after dinner and they walked to the library together, discussing their day and sleeping arrangements. It seemed the Slytherin common room was in the dungeon behind an indistinguishable blank wall, password protected which Harry thought he had to find out where. He had discussed the advantages of his Parselmouth ability with Remus and his uncle fleetingly mentioned that it might gain him entrance to the Slytherin common room without knowing the password. Harry was of course eager to discover if that was indeed the case.

They finished their homework in peaceful silence and Harry got more than one strange look from several of his housemates. He was slightly disgusted that people could be so prejudiced against Slytherin that since Blaise was now in the house of snakes, she was the evil incarnated. He had discussed with her what her housemates said about their friendship, but Blaise said the idea hadn't really sunk in. She had made two new girlfriends however, Daphne Greengrass and Tracey Davis, who seemed fine with it during dinner. Harry didn't recognize the names 'Greengrass' and 'Davis' but considered this a good thing, since Remus had told him of all the names of Death Eaters that the 'Order of the Phoenix' had suspected.

Harry stood up and went to leave but then saw the looks he was getting from the other tables. So with a look to the spectators, he walked behind Blaise, leaned over her shoulder and kissed her on the cheek before whispering in her ear, "Goodnight Blaise Zabini, thank you for being my friend." He exited the library and left behind

several dumbfounded first-year Ravenclaws and a blushing Blaise.
"You're welcome, Harry Potter", she whispered to herself.

(1) Taken from 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone', Snape's speech!

The First Week at Hogwarts, part 2

Harry awoke the next morning at 6am once more and did his morning ritual of brushing his teeth, exercising outside on the grounds and returning to the dorm for a shower. He went to breakfast extra early and left before the late sleepers had arrived so he avoided the Boy-Who-Lived worshippers. He still had forty-five minutes until Herbology and decided to practice some charms near the lake.

He sat down on a flat stone next to the lake and took out his custom wand and book of spells, grade 1. He realized that if this continued the way it was going; Charms class would become awfully boring. But he reckoned that once he had taken his first Transfiguration and Defense class after this afternoon, he could spend some of his time working ahead in those subjects as well. He had resolved that his Potions practice could be put to rest for this year but he would take it on again after that. Harry had no desire to become a Potions Master but he realized that almost half of the subject of Healing consisted of providing and administering potions. For now he would devote his attention to the wand-based subjects since he couldn't practice them at home.

He was working through the charms in the book one by one and by the time he saw other students walking towards the greenhouses, Harry estimated he had gotten ahead of schedule until around Halloween. The Levitating Charm was providing difficulty to perform and he didn't know what he was doing wrong, since the swish and flick were easy enough. He put the book back in his bag, walked towards the greenhouses and saw Blaise walking there also with her two new girlfriends from Slytherin. Harry, in all his charming and pureblood-raised self, decided to make himself known.

"Goodmorning Blaise, ladies. I don't think we have been introduced. I am Harry James Potter, a good friend of Blaise." Harry gave a slight bow in respect and pureblood custom and ignored the snort coming from Blaise when he said he was a good friend as if they'd known each other for years in stead of just two days.

Tracey, a brunette with shorter, shoulder-length hair and warm brown eyes, gave a curtsey and returned the custom. "Hi. I'm Tracey Davis and this is Daphne Greengrass, it is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Potter. We've heard things about you from Blaise and were most

interested after that." She offered her hand, signifying the return of introduction and hand of friendship.

Harry took it gently, gave it a small kiss on the back and spoke up with a smile on his face. "Nothing bad, I hope. And the pleasure is all mine Ms. Davis, I assure you..... Ms. Greengrass," Harry said with an inclination of the head towards the beautiful blond with a cold exterior.

"Mr. Potter," was all she returned with the same inclination.

The four walked towards the greenhouse where Professor Sprout was waiting on them. They were told to pair up and Harry coupled with Blaise, while Tracey chose Daphne. The lecture part discussed the syllabus for the first year and what dynamic there was in the class. Homework assignments would be given before the practical sessions so that they would be prepared for handling the plants in Greenhouse 1. As they were given a tour of the greenhouse, Harry recognized mainly harmless flowers and plants, most used for decoration or as food and a few were used as potion ingredients. He had expected the subject of Herbology to be boring, but necessary since it was a foundation for Potions, and he was partially correct. It seemed that they didn't trust first-years to correctly follow the instructions which was, as Harry thought back to the boil-incident in Potions class, completely reasonable. Many plants would be studied theoretically only, because they were too dangerous to handle by amateur herbologists.

Herbology class passed without incident and Harry parted from the threesome of girls to head towards Transfiguration with Kevin. He was surprised that all three girls were not afraid to get their hands dirty, contrary to the Ravenclaw first-year girls.

They arrived at the Transfiguration classroom where the door was open in invitation and the students, both Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, walked in without thought. Harry and Kevin were some of the last students to file in since the Ravenclaws had class further away from this room. Kevin hurried to the last table in the back to avoid getting punished for being slightly late but Harry noticed a weird glow around the cat on the professor's desk. He instantly knew what was going on, especially after the Marauder stories and moved quickly towards the desk. He scratched the feline behind her ears and Harry was slightly astounded that the animal leaned in to the attention.

"You're a good kitty, aren't you? Yes you are, yes you are." Harry started cooing softly to the animal to catch the attention of the classroom. After a slight pause he continued loud enough for the class to hear....

"You know, it's not very nice to spy on people Professor McGonagall...."

It was amusing to see the cat Animagus turn her head towards him so quickly and narrowing its eyes. Harry took a stepped back and motioned towards the cat to get on with it. The cat jumped off the desk and transformed mid-air into an embarrassed Professor McGonagall. The whole class let out an "oooooh!" to McGonagalls Animagus transformations, but soon it changed into giggles and laughter when they realized exactly what Harry had been petting.

"Mr. Potter!" The professor started.... "How on earth did you know?" She continued in a much softer tone.

"I....."He started saying. He didn't want to give away the secret of his contact lenses or the fact that he was raised by Remus and knew all about Hogwarts before coming here. "I have my sources." He finished mysteriously.

McGonagall narrowed her eyes once more only this time in her own form and the intimidating factor was a lot more effective. "Very well."

"Transfiguration is some of the most complex and dangerous magic you will learn at Hogwarts," she said. "Anyone messing around in my class will leave and not come back. You have been warned." Then she changed her desk into a pig and back again. The class was sufficiently impressed and couldn't wait to get started, but soon realized they weren't going to be changing furniture into animals for a long time. 'I will if I can help it', Harry thought to himself, still planning on becoming an Animagus in his first year here at Hogwarts. McGonagall's transformation gave Harry new motivation for that goal and he realized at the end of the class that he would have a lot to do to accomplish that objective. The lecture McGonagall was given finally reached an end and they were given a match to turn it into a needle.

It took him four tries to complete the transfiguration with the necessary swish to the right, the incantation "Compositus Abeo" and

the visualizing of the process of turning it into needle. The first time he only managed to turn it pointy; the next it turned only silver coloured; then the eye formed and finally it was a complete needle after that. He wanted to try again so he went with the second transfiguration assignment, turning a needle back into a match. Harry performed the swish to the left, muttered "Compositus Revertio" visualized the process from earlier in reverse. The needle immediately turned into a match, much to Harry's satisfaction.

The second try was much easier and he had the match transfigured on the first attempt. He started turning it and back again until he was fed up with the assignment and looked around the classroom. It seems he was the only one to complete the assignment, so he started reading ahead in 'A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration' to see what he could do to work ahead towards the Animagus transformation and realized the book wasn't nearly advanced enough. His 'secrets' book wasn't much help either. It only mentioned some advice and the requirement of skill in Self-Transfiguration but not the instructions for the process itself. Harry reckoned he would owl order for the intermediate and advanced book of transfiguration to be able to study it.

Suddenly, his book was snatched out of his hands and he came face to face with an irate Professor McGonagall. He gulped, wondering what he had done wrong, before the professor spoke up.

"Mr. Potter! Why aren't you attempting the assignment? Do you think yourself above the required course work that you can just sit and read in this class? Why don't you show us how to complete the transfiguration?" McGonagall spoke in a vexed tone that Harry didn't like one bit. He looked towards his desk and saw that he had left a match as a final result of his practice.

Without replying the professor, he took out his custom wand from the wrist holster, to which McGonagall raised an eyebrow, for she recognized the standard Auror equipment wand holster but didn't recognize the strange looking, beautiful wand. Harry muttered very softly;

"Compositus Abeo", with the swish and turned the match into a perfect needle, much to the astonishment of the Transfiguration teacher. He continued softly however, "Compositus Revertio" and with a swish to the left returned the needle into match. Professor

McGonagall's jaw fell open in surprise, which Harry found amusing to say the least.

"Can I return to my reading now professor? Or could you give me some more matches to try out multiple transfigurations at once?" This question caused the professor to snap out of it and she wordlessly left several matches on his desk. Harry still had about ten minutes of class so he went to work on them, as his 'secrets' book told him that multiple transfigurations at once were possible by simply adding the word "Plura" to the incantation and visualizing the process en masse.

When the bell rang signalling the end of class, Harry was just finishing up with his control of multiple transfiguration, managing which matches to change and which not from the ones that were before him. He received jealous looks from the other Ravenclaws beside Kevin and hostile glances from the Hufflepuffs for utterly outranking them.

"Mr. Potter, please stay behind." McGonagall spoke up.

He sat back down at the desk, returned his things to his bag and waited patiently while the other student filed out of the classroom. When the last Hufflepuff had left, shooting one last menacing look towards him, the professor closed the door and turned to him. Harry thought she might be trying to intimidate him, but Harry was pretty much immune to such things, because of his own moral fibre and being raised by Remus. He wasn't egotistical, just perfectly comfortable with his own character, which might be a bit arrogant.

"So..." McGonagall started.

"What can I do for you professor?" Harry replied, not taking the bait so easily.

"Twenty points to Ravenclaw," she started, "for the completion of both the assignment and the successful reverse transfiguration. Was that your first time performing that particular transfiguration Mr. Potter?"

"No," Harry replied and the professor started to take on a disapproving look, no doubt assuming he had practiced transfiguration at home. "I had been doing both the transfiguration

and reverse one for the first fifteen minutes of our practice time. When you interrupted my reading, I was already able to do it flawlessly. Did you assume that I practiced transfiguration at home? I thought the ministry tracked underage magic for children enlisted to go to Hogwarts?" Harry asked, wondering how the professor thought he had surpassed that obstacle.

"They do," McGonagall said. "However, I have never seen a first-year performing that assignment successfully during their first lesson with no previous familiarity in Transfiguration."

"Now, I didn't say that. I've read the book, 'A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration' and various other sources of information and merely used them to the best of my knowledge. I am curious though how you thought I managed to avoid the Ministry of Magic's notice with performing magic at home." Harry cut in before she could continue.

The Professor reluctantly explained the situation. "The Ministry of Magic tends to ignore first-year students' magic-use, since they are curious about their new wand and tend to practice, especially so for Muggle-born and Muggle-raised students. When students go home after their first-year, everyone receives a notice that magic is not to be used at home, according to the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction for Underage Sorcery. Also, I couldn't help but notice the intricate design of the wand; did you get it at Ollivanders or somewhere else?" She asked with the same disapproving tone of other wand stores that Ollivander used on his eleventh birthday.

"I bought my wand at Ollivanders, though I don't know why it would matter." Harry replied without lying. He did buy a wand at the wand store in Diagon Alley, it just wasn't the one he was using at that time.

"Very well. Then I congratulate you on your excellent performance in transfiguration. You should know that your father was a prodigy at Transfiguration himself, but not even he managed what you did today. You can go to lunch...." Professor McGonagall ended the conversation in a deflated and Harry thought wistful tone.

He knew his Gryffindor parents were favorites of the Transfiguration professor and thought she might be disappointed that Harry didn't join the house of lions. He exited the classroom and left for a quick lunch, since it was almost time for Defense against the Dark Arts with the Gryffindors.

Kevin was a bit down since he hadn't been able to transfigure the match into a needle so Harry said he would help him with it tonight in the dorm if he brought his match. The Muggle-born boy immediately brightened after that and walked with Harry towards the Defense classroom with a smile. When he asked what McGonagall wanted of him, Harry only replied that she wanted to award him points for doing the transfiguration correctly.

Defense was a disappointment. Professor Quirinus Quirrell was a traveler of sorts who had encountered vampires on one of his latest trips to Albania and had become a stuttering idiot ever since. The man had a turban wrapped around the back of his head, which he claimed to have received from an African prince that smelled of garlic and couldn't complete a sentence within a minute. Harry thought the stuttering was a bit excessive and got a bad feeling from the professor, as if it was all an act. It seemed they weren't going to learn anything useful in this class however, so Harry would take Defense Against the Dark Arts on as a self-study subject and would use the time in class to read ahead.

Harry had come up with writing a letter to Remus during class since his uncle would want to receive confirmation that he had been sorted into Ravenclaw and know how his time at Hogwarts was going.

Uncle,

Congratulations, I've been sorted into Ravenclaw as you expected. I'm writing this letter during defense, which is taught by Professor Quirinus Quirrell who is a stuttering and incompetent idiot. You might remember him from the visit to Diagon on my latest birthday, in the Leaky Cauldron? Anyway, the class is useless, so it's safe to say I'll be doing other things during the class. As such, I've found the time to write a letter to my favorite and only uncle.

I'm starting to work ahead in a certain subject for my marauder project tonight after the demonstration this morning from Ms. Kitty. I've already written the owl order for the necessary books and it'll probably go out with this letter. I'm going to need some proper defense books as well, could you help me with that? The jinxes, hexes and curses books are alright for a while, but I need something subject-proper, stuff that can be expected on examinations.

Anyway, Charms was okay yesterday only way too easy. I'm somewhere up to Halloween already! History was as you mentioned so no surprise there. Potions class was effortless as we both expected. Herbology is boring in first year but I don't think I can work ahead, other than reading the books about the subject. Transfiguration is easy enough as well, again no surprise there, but it's going to take time to get up to speed with my special project. Astronomy starts tomorrow and did you know the Ravenclaws have study sessions? Flying class is on Friday morning starting in the second week, so I'll probably send another letter after that in the weekend.

I've met a girl on the train, Blaise Zabini, who is so far my only real friend. She was sorted into Slytherin so our friendship will stir some trouble in the future I assume. I'm not sure of the house interaction between Slytherin and Ravenclaw, but so far we haven't been bothered about it. My other friend (Yes, I already have two!) is a Muggle-born boy in my dorm, Kevin Entwhistle. He has an ability that I'll tell you in person or when I've learned the privacy charm like the Marauder's Map. Speaking of which, do you have any idea where it might be?

How has the construction been going? If you decide on the opening date you should pay someone at the Daily Prophet to advertise about it. I'm not sure if our clientele will read that paper, but considering the nature of the pub, it'll stir the news quite a bit and become a topic of conversation. I also need to tell you something about my wand, but that too will have to wait on the privacy charm.

HJP

Just as he finished the letter for Remus, the bell rang signaling the end of a well-spent Defense class. He went to the library to see if any books on the Animagus transformation were available to first-years at least, since he suspected there might be several useful ones in the Restricted Section. However, that part of the library was unfortunately out of bounds, for now. It would be a different story when he had his father's invisibility cloak and was skilled enough to avoid the protective enchantments for that section.

Unfortunately, it seemed that the transfiguration books available in the library were of standard quality and could be bought in a 'normal'

bookshop such as Flourish & Blotts and others. He would check out 'Katern' in Knockturn Alley over Christmas if necessary, but Harry assumed that the 'Guide to Advanced Transfiguration' would explain several difficult aspects of the Animagus transformation.

He went back to his dorm after a quick visit to the Owlery since dinner was still over two hours away. There, he spent a few minutes with Kevin explaining the 'secret' of Transfiguration and what he probably was doing wrong during the class. As soon as he started making changes to his match, Harry went back to his own desk and started working ahead for Transfiguration himself.

The Animagus transformation was a difficult process which could take years because of the necessary skill required for it. Harry realized he would have to work through several years of teachings in the subject on his own quickly if he wanted to finish the process within a year. It wasn't the case that he had to master the subject, but he just had to be experienced enough to safely perform Self-Transfiguration. That in itself was going to take a great deal of time. Sure, he could skip most of the assignments with the help of his 'secrets' books, but he still had to perform most, if not all of the branches of Transfiguration to get to that goal.

Dinner was a quiet affair and Harry completed the day by continuing with his work in Transfiguration.

The next day, things took place as before until it was time for Astronomy in the late morning with the Gryffindors. The class was taught by Professor Aurora Sinistra, a pretty, young witch with rich, ebony locks and brilliant blue eyes. Harry estimated she was not even a decade out of Hogwarts, which would make her around twenty-five. The male first-years seemed to have eyes only for the professor and not their books in front of them, which made them unable to answer any of the questions asked by Sinistra. Harry found it amusing to see several of the female first-years with jealous and withering looks, considering they were all only eleven years old.

The class passed without incident, since Harry and the females in the class answered Sinistra's questions without problems. It seemed that Harry was correct in assuming that his Muggle astronomy books would be more advanced and would come in hand with the homework for the class. Professor Sinistra went in dept of the importance of Astronomy in the Wizarding World and Harry even

learned something new when she spoke of the influence of the planetary alignments to rituals of all kind. He hadn't read anything yet of rituals, considering runes and chanting in ancient languages were required skills to have for the subject. As the class came to an end, Sinistra reminded them to bring their telescopes in the evening and to prepare for the practical. Harry chuckled when he saw Neville Longbottom staying behind and trying to chat up to the professor, but he didn't stick around to see the result.

After lunch, Charms was humorous when Harry asked the professor to see what he was doing wrong with the Levitation Charm. When Flitwick finally got back up from the floor, he informed Harry of his incorrect pronunciation and to place the stress on the different syllable in 'Leviosa'. He seemed to avoid Harry after that, as if he was afraid of finding out what Harry could do. Harry found this arrangement to his liking, for he could reread and perform the charms in 'The Book of Spells, grade 1' one after another. Whenever Blaise was showing difficulty with the charm they were practicing in the class, Harry would step in and help her by correcting the fault in her spell-casting.

After Charms and dinner, Harry reported to the common room for his study session. They were asked to perform the spells they had learned, to answer questions about the theoretical classes and to read the material for the coming week's classes. Harry kept his self-studies from the older years, since it would only draw attention to him and that was never a good thing in his opinion. Kevin gave him a confused glance because of it, but was loyal enough not to betray him.

Around midnight, every Ravenclaw first-year set off to the Astronomy tower across the castle, with their books and telescope set in their bags. It was a beautiful clear dark sky, outstanding for stargazing in the night. The Gryffindors were already waiting for them with their telescopes set up which made Harry suspect that the Gryffindor common room might be somewhere close to the tower. His classmates and he went to set up for the class as well, but were interrupted by a shriek from missy bushy brown hair, Hermoine Granger.

Harry looked up from his working at the telescope and saw that the attention of the whole class was focused on him and his telescope.

He smirked when he realized what they were staring at and spoke up.

"Is something the matter?" He asked

"Your telescope!" Hermione shrieked.

"Yes? What about it? She is a beauty, isn't she?" Harry replied softly petting his instrument lovingly in mocking.

Harry had picked out a 'Skywatcher Mercury 707', which was listed as a child's telescope in the Muggle world but was still one of the best telescopes that didn't require electricity of any kind. Many 'professional' telescopes had programming inside them for stargazing and the autofocus option, but these extra's usually had to use batteries and that wasn't possible at Hogwarts. The electricity/magic interaction of blowing things up was a problem that Harry wanted to fix, but it required a vast amount of knowledge about magic so he had it postponed to later on in his education.

"It's not the right telescope! You were supposed to have picked one up at Diagon Alley, not one in the Muggle world." Hermione continued shrieking and Harry knew she was upset because of the better equipment he had.

"Really? It didn't say so in my Hogwarts acceptance letter. It mentioned the class of Astronomy and the instruction to bring a telescope for stargazing, not where to buy the things." Harry explained calmly, knowing it would only make her angrier.

"But..... But....." Harry was surprised to see tears in the girl's eyes over such a trivial matter.

"What is going on here?" Professor Sinistra intervened before things got out of hand.

"Potter's got a Muggle telescope." Surprisingly, it was Neville Longbottom who said this menacingly. Harry had no idea why the Boy-Who-Lived would be hostile towards him. However, it didn't have the effect he desired....

"Really? Muggles practice astronomy as well? Amazing," Sinistra said. Harry was feeling slightly disgusted again by the prejudice

against Muggles but he reckoned that a pureblood witch such as the professor, raised in a pureblood household and withheld from the Muggle world just didn't know any better. Oh well, her loss, his gain.

"Yes, they study outer space as well, professor. I've just finished setting up my telescope, so take a look for yourself, you'll find it enlightening." Harry spoke mysteriously.

The professor moved behind the telescope and started by searching for the nearest star, Alpha Centauri. As soon as she found it, she gasped and Harry smiled widely when she turned unbelieving eyes towards him. She looked once more to make sure she wasn't imagining things and spoke up in barely a whisper.

"This is incredible. It's so clear, so close by. This telescope must see more constellations than I even know of existing. With a full moon and the right sky, you could practically pick out a vacation spot."

Harry decided to intervene and prevent her from losing her mind. "If you want professor, you can borrow my telescope for your own nights of stargazing." He said strongly to bring her attention back to the class she was supposed to be teaching.

Sinistra removed her gaze from the telescope and turned with a very appreciative smile towards Harry. "That would be most appreciated, Mr. Potter. I must say, this is the first time a student brought a Muggle telescope to the class and even the first time I've seen one." She said.

"Oh, it wasn't unintentionally professor. You see, when shopping in Diagon Alley for my school things, I noticed the telescopes for sale there were seriously outdated compared to the Muggle world. I asked the salesman what spells or charms were placed on the telescopes and had my uncle put them on my own. I decided to bring it to Hogwarts instead of buying an old-fashioned one and here we are." Harry said nonchalantly.

"Well, I'm pleased that you did, Mr. Potter and ten points to Ravenclaw for the generous offer of letting me use it when you don't need to."

Harry left Astronomy with a smile on his face. The class continued without incident, only Harry could feel the menacing looks from the

Gryffindors and the jealous looks from the Ravenclaws the entire time he was working with Professor Sinistra. She wanted to know all about the instrument and Harry thought she might have had an orgasm if he had mentioned this wasn't even considered a professional telescope. It was obvious to him that Astronomy was her passion in life and she made a very good teacher for the subject.

The rest of the week passed without incident since Harry had already had all his classes at least once. He continued with his work in Transfiguration, kept Charms on the low burner and did his homework diligently, but his Animagus transformation was the main goal for now. He wanted to have practiced enough from the Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration for when the book 'Intermediate Transfiguration' arrived by owl order. It was an impossible goal, working through a book that contained material for two years in approximately two weeks, but Harry worked his ass off, which was mainly the point of setting the goal for himself.

Flying hadn't started yet this week and Harry found himself itching to prove himself on a broom. He had become an expert at Quidditch according to Remus and if he wanted to, Harry could join the Ravenclaw Quidditch team as a Chaser without question. Early Friday morning was spent in an abandoned classroom working on Transfiguration and in the late morning, during Defense Against the Dark Arts, Harry thought about what to do this weekend.

Homework and working ahead was all good and useful, but Harry had promised himself to have fun during his magical education. It was for this reason that he hadn't canceled his soccer practice during his additional lessons for being raised as a pureblood heir. He got plenty of entertainment out of correctly performed charms or transfigurations but he supposed he should engage in at least one extracurricular activity. Quidditch for leisure would take a lot of his time hence Harry had decided not to join the team until next year.

He remembered that he had packed his football with his wardrobe on a whim the night before he left for Hogwarts and decided to play some soccer on the weekend. With over a third of the student population being Muggle-borns, there had to be some that were interested in the sport. During dinner, he brought it up with Kevin and his friend quickly agreed to come, saying they could go after visiting the Thestrals and Hippogriffs with Hagrid the next day.

"Ello you two. Ready to see them Hippogriffs?"

It was Saturday morning, Kevin and Harry were visiting Hagrid who had promised he'd take them to see the Hippogriff herd. When Harry and Hagrid explained to Kevin exactly what Thestrals were and when you were able to see them, he was disappointed that he hadn't seen anyone die. Harry told him of his solution and Kevin agreed to do the same over Christmas, after which Hagrid would take them both to see the Thestrals.

"Now, firs' thing gotta know abou' Hippogriffs is, they're proud," Hagrid said. "Easily offended, Hippogriffs are. Don't ever insult one, 'cause it might be the last thing yeh do."

They reached the edge of the forest and Hagrid motioned for them to slow down. As they took the last few steps through the trees, a paddock came into view where about a dozen strange, but beautiful creatures were loafing around. They had the bodies, hind legs, and tails of horses, but the front legs, wings and heads of what seemed to be giant eagles, with cruel, steel-colored beaks and large, brilliantly, orange eyes. The talons on their front legs were half a foot long and deadly looking. The beasts were in no way chained, but it was obvious they were tamed because as soon as they noticed Hagrid, they came towards the three. Harry and Kevin both took steps back, obviously afraid by the approach but Hagrid stayed put and petted one on its head.

"Beau'iful creatures, aren' they?" He said with pride in his voice.

"Yeh always wait fer the Hippogriff ter make the firs' move," Hagrid continued. "It's polite, see? Yeh walk toward him, and yeh bow, an' yeh wait. If he bows back, yeh're allowed ter touch him. If he doesn't bow, then get away from him sharpish, 'cause those talons hurt. Which one of yeh want to try firs'?"

Kevin immediately stepped forward and climbed over the fence. Hagrid, recognizing an animal lover like he, stepped back from the Hippogriff he was petting...

"Easy now, Kevin," said Hagrid quietly. "Yeh've got eye contact, now try not ter blink.... Hippogriffs don' trust yeh if yeh blink too much...."

Kevin stood motionless halfway between the fence and the Hippogriff. When he had its attention, Kevin bowed instinctively and the Hippogriff bowed back immediately. He approached the creature and softly patted its head, until the Hippogriff turned into the hand so he was scratching the beak. Kevin softly whispered to the creature which had his eyes half-closed, lazily and enjoying the ministrations.

"You really are an extraordinary creature, you know that? You're partly responsible for me joining this world and until this moment, I had many doubts. But now, seeing something as amazing as a Hippogriff, I'm sure I made the right decision."

Harry knew Kevin missed his home, the farm where he grew up and the interaction with animals but he didn't know it had been that serious. He walked towards a different Hippogriff and bowed after making eye contact. The creature, seeing its counterpart was being fondled pleasantly, gave a small bow in return quickly and allowed Harry to scratch its chest.

"He's right; you really are a remarkable, magical species. Can you..... Can you show me what you can do?" Harry asked a bit submissively, directly looking at the beast.

The Hippogriff stepped back a bit, and Hagrid tried to come between it and Harry but he was too far away. The creature rose on his hind legs, landed back to the ground and dashed past Harry in a run. Halfway across the paddock, it spread its wings wide open and beat them repeatedly until it was up in the air. The Hippogriff glided through the air, circling around the paddock once and landing back down to the ground directly in front of Harry. He broke out of his stupor of seeing such a marvelous display of power in its wings and body and slowly approached to pet him once again. "Incredible" was all he said for the rest of the time with the herd.

After they said their goodbyes to Hagrid and stopped the Hippogriffs from following them back to the castle, they walked towards an open clearing next to the lake that Harry had discovered during his morning runs.

"Why didn't you tell me you were homesick?" Harry asked his friend quietly.

"I didn't want to bother you. You're always busy when we're not in class with practicing or together with Blaise. It didn't seem that important..." Kevin said in a defeated tone.

"I'm sorry. Blaise is a good friend since the Hogwarts Express and I'd like to keep it that way, even though she's in Slytherin. She has her own friends in Slytherin house and you're mine in Ravenclaw, which means you can disturb me with these kinds of things. You know how I think of the others in the dorm; you're the only one worth hanging out with." He replied with a chuckle at the end.

"I know that you realize you and Blaise can't be the best of friends, but that doesn't mean you have to avoid her. Just sit on the other side if you can and the Slytherins won't bother her about it." Harry smiled when Kevin nodded and took out his coin-sized football, softly casting 'Engorgio' at it.

They played a one-on-one match until lunch, with a goal made from their jackets. Since it was a Saturday and had no class or detention, they were allowed to wear normal clothing. On their way back to the Great Hall, Harry left the football in the original size under his arm intentionally, catching the attention from several Muggle-borns from various years. By the time they were seated and ready for lunch, they had fourteen contenders for next weekend's match.

On the way back to the dorm, Filch tried to nick the ball by accusing them of 'disturbing the peace in the hallways' but Harry wouldn't have any of it. He pointed out that the hallway they were in was empty at the moment and it was a personal property, not mentioned on the banned items list. He was sure that Filch would add 'footballs' to the list, but that wouldn't be implemented until next year and Harry was confident he'd have a solution for it by then.

The rest of the weekend flew by without incident. Harry and Kevin explored the castle for a bit, finding and pointing out some of the secret passageways his uncle had told him about, locating the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff common rooms and just wandering the hallways. Harry continued his Transfiguration practice with vigor, determined to reach his goal and instructed Kevin on it when he requested the help. Before long, Monday had come again and Harry started a pattern in the continuing weeks.

(') Several things from the Hippogriff scene come from 'Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban' though it's not really a single paragraph.

Halloween

The weeks flew by and before Harry realized it, it was already October. He had started with 'Intermediate Transfiguration' and was quickly coming to a very significant discovery. Transfiguration was a very important skill to have in dueling.

He had read the syllabus of the Defense Against the Dark Arts examinations, both O.W.L.'s and N.E.W.T.'s, and came to the conclusion that the subject was about protection against enemies. These could be various dark creatures as most assumed, but also fellow witches and wizards. To have the skill to be able to transfigure debris into distractions and dangerous animals was almost exhilarating to Harry. He reckoned that this is what made Headmaster Dumbledore such an able dueler and how he was able to hold his own against Voldemort.

So far, Harry was only able to transfigure smaller animals out of objects and in reverse, but the outlook on the coming material was improving his motivation to say the least. Conjuration, the skill to 'transfigure' things from thin air, was a skill he didn't require for his Animagus project, but as soon as Harry had completed that goal, he would look into the branch.

Harry was thinking that a lot of things were postponed to later on, after he completed his Animagus transformation that is. He had already taken on two additional subjects for his free time and couldn't afford to add more at the moment. He still wasn't making any progress in the first extra, time-consuming objective and thought back to when he read about it in 'Magical Theory'.

'Wizards and witches of today use a wand or different kind of focus to use their magic and cast spells. This provides for better aim and makes it easier to draw the magic from their magical core. In the past, witches and wizards were capable of amazing feats in wandless magic, mainly because a wand was such a rare paraphernalia. But now, only the most powerful and experienced can use even only minor wandless magic.'

'The casting of spells through the wand happens in a way that a wand focuses or channels the magic from your magical core into the spell. For young children, the core is still too unstable for this to happen, because of its rapidly growing nature, hence the accidental

magic. At the age of eleven, the core automatically stabilizes enough for casting spells and at seventeen, when the child reaches the age of majority, the magical core expands and becomes fully stabilized, hence 'coming of age'.

'Most witches and wizards of today don't feel the difference in the 'coming of age' period, though some do. The control of their magic improves thusly that the difference is negligible, due to the magical education and practice of spells. However, the more powerful a child is magically before he reaches the age of majority, the more powerful he will become after that. The stabilizing of the core gives more access to the magical reserves of every witch and wizard, though there are of course differences in quantity in each magical being.'

Harry immediately recognized that the text was probably written by someone who was incapable of wandless magic. "Adalbert Waffling," Harry mused silently. He continued to read the book for diversity, instead of keeping to his Transfiguration only and the volume listed several laws of magic. They were things that were probably unattainable by the author, worked out and declared 'impossible' in the fundamental laws of magic. Harry recognized several concepts in book that were already defied and decided to interpret the book with a grain of salt.

The book was written in an authoritative tone and screamed of control and influence, the same thing that is missing from Knockturn Alley. The feats that were declared impossible were described in Harry's eyes not like it just wasn't doable to violate the 'fundamental' laws of magic, but like it shouldn't be done. He remembered what his marauder uncle had said, "Almost every rule can be broken," and decided to try and apply it to these laws.

He had looked up the Summoning and Banishing Charm in 'The Book of Spells, grade 4' in the library and performed them both perfectly on a pillow within the hour. After that, he had spent almost an hour every night, sitting on the side of his bed, trying to summon a quill from the desk without a wand. So far, he hadn't made any progress but he was working through the book 'The Legend of Magic' which described the way ancient witches and wizards used to practice magic.

The book went in detail of how they lived, brewed potions with the ingredients they could find and mentioned some of the magic which was what Harry was interested in. So far, he had only recognized elementary control, summoning and banishing, levitating and shielding magic but was satisfied enough with reading to try it out. The magical theory book mentioned the partial stabilizing of his magical core and Harry was determined to use it fully. He realized that it might not be possible for him to do it, since he hadn't passed his 'coming of age' yet, but reasoned that he would then find out for himself if that was the case.

His other additional subject was Occlumency. He remembered one day during dinner when looking at Dumbledore that master Legilimens were able to detect lies through the use of passive Legilimency. So Harry continued with his Occlumency book where he left off and came to the conclusion that he never should have stopped at forming his shields.

'When the shielding of the mind part is completed, the real effort and advantages of Occlumency come into play. When an experienced Legilimens recognizes a mind is shielded with an Occlumency ability superior to their Legilimency skill, they'll practice the use of periodic stealthy glances at the shields to find weaknesses or to develop similar shields to improve one's own.'

'The next step in Occlumency is to prevent this. It manages the ability to project false memories to the Legilimens, keeping your own mind locked up while the attacker thinks he has full access. To develop this skill, one must first make use of the advantages of Occlumency, besides shielding your mind that is.'

'The visualization of the mind usually contains a filing system of sorts in which you can store your memories. Whether a book with pages, a building with rooms or some kind of location with crooks and corners, there is always some sort of cataloging possible. The goal to realize here is to organize the mind with its memories, thoughts and feelings sorted by association. The order doesn't matter, since you'll subconsciously be able to navigate through it anyway, but the filing usually happens in something like recent; years ago; plans for the future; location; family and acquaintances.'

'The application of such a system will provide you with faster cognitive processes, which will allow you to read faster, think faster

and generally be smarter in total. People who have mastered Occlumency are usually geniuses in their chosen branch of magic because of this advantage. However, mastering this ability of the art is a difficult and arduous process and can require several years. The filing must happen on its own schedule and can't be rushed, therefore the time period will differ among the practitioners.'

The book described how to start filing memories in your mind through meditation and even made it possible in your sleep for small periods of time. Harry realized he had a major advantage with his mind/library, being able to file thoughts, memories and feelings away in books, placed on various shelves, in different rooms inside his library. The process took a lot of time; it would usually start when he was lying on his bed and continued through the night until Kevin woke him up in the morning. Harry smiled as he thought of the boy who he had chosen to become friends with.

It wasn't long after two weeks of classes that people were making excuses to talk to Harry, trying to make friends with him. He would always politely answer the question they had asked, but never continued any kind of conversation. It seemed that Harry's prowess in classes, his History notes and his skill in Potions had reached the Hogwarts rumor mill and people were drawn to it. One day, Neville Longbottom joined their table when he, Blaise and Kevin were in the library finishing up their Charms essays.

"Yes? Is there something you need?" Harry asked curtly.

The Boy-Who-Lived looked menacingly towards Blaise and turned his attention back to Harry.

"Why do you sit with a Slytherin, Potter?" Neville spoke in an aggressive tone.

"She was invited, you aren't." Kevin said irritably. "It's none of your business." Harry inserted. "Now, What. Do. You. Want?" Kevin answered and spoke the last sentence slowly, as if speaking to a child.

"I heard you were raised in the Muggle world so I'll explain it to you. You shouldn't sit with Slytherins. You should only make friends with the right people and I can help you there." Neville continued,

ignoring Kevin completely when he was talking and shooting more hostile looks towards Blaise.

"Not interested, please leave." Harry said but unfortunately, Neville did no such thing.

"Don't you know who I am? I'm Neville Longbottom, the Boy-Who-Lived! I survived the Killing Curse and defeated You-Know-Who! You should be grateful that I'll let you be my friend! You could do my homework and in return, I'll let you hang out with us Gryffindors instead of that boring Muggle sport and studying with bookish Ravenclaws and a Slytherin." Neville said, turned puce-coloured and only barely maintaining his composure.

He was referring to Harry's Saturday-morning soccer gathering when speaking of the 'boring Muggle sport'. The matches had grown to two full teams of eleven players and were becoming a hit among the student population. Players existed mainly of Muggle-borns, but several half-blood students showed interest and came to watch frequently. They even brought a few of their pureblood friends along sometimes. Harry thought Neville might feel a bit jealous of Harry's increasing popularity, for his magical prowess and soccer matches, and was taking away the novelty of his fame.

"No, thank you." Harry replied calmly to the offer of friendship, knowing it would push the pompous arse over the edge.

And so it did. Neville stood and took out his wand, losing it completely and started threatening Harry.

"You'd better watch your back, Potter. You'll soon wish you hadn't rejected my offer." And with that, he turned and stomped out of the library.

Harry found the situation extremely amusing when the Boy-Who-Lived did nothing but pointing with his wand after taking it out and even Kevin chuckled while shaking his head. Blaise however, was looking at Harry as if he'd lost his marbles.

"Why didn't you take his offer? I thought you would want to be his friend, even though I couldn't be yours anymore...." She said in a soft tone.

"Longbottom is an idiot, that's the only reason he'd want to be friends with me. And I've told you both already Blaise, I have my friends and I'm not about to abandon them." Harry said reassuringly to her and looked towards Kevin to see if the message had gotten through.

"I guess you're right, being friends with the Boy-Who-Lived and sharing his fame could be beneficial in some ways, but I choose my friends meticulously. Longbottom's probably just not very pleased that I've taken away his glory of joining the Gryffindor Quidditch team." Harry scowled here at the favoritism shown towards the Boy-Who-Lived.

At the first Gryffindor-Slytherin flying lesson of the year, Neville got awarded the seeker-spot on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. Blaise had told them what had happened after the lesson and expected Neville to be punished for flying when explicitly told not to.

Malfoy had nicked Neville's Remembrall and was taunting Neville with it during the lesson. When Madam Hooch was bringing a student who had injured herself towards the Hospital wing, the blonde pureblood flew away, even though warned not to, and threw it high into the air. Longbottom flew after it recklessly, even having trouble staying on his broom according to Blaise, and barely caught it even though the throw was with a redundant arch.

To top it all off, a broomstick arrived in the middle of the Great Hall during breakfast the next morning and landed in front of the Boy-Who-Lived. Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling merrily when he rose up.

"Ah yes, let me make an announcement. Gryffindor's Quidditch team captain Oliver Wood has been unable to select a new seeker in his tryouts. However during yesterday morning's flying lesson, Mr. Longbottom showed an extraordinary amount of skill on a broom and as such, has been selected as the new seeker for Gryffindor. Due to their inability to select a seeker during tryouts, I've decided to make an exception to the rule and allowed Mr. Longbottom the possession of a broom. I wish you good luck on the second of November, Mr. Longbottom." Dumbledore said and finished to a tremendous applause coming from the Gryffindor table while Harry, all the Slytherins and even some other students were scowling at the preferential treatment.

The day after that, Harry's soccer match of eight versus eight students was a tremendous success and the topic of conversation for the rest of the week. Kevin, of all people, even went a step further and stood on the bench during lunch in the Great Hall after the match to make an announcement.

"All students who are interested in joining or watching the soccer match can come to the clearing next to the lake on Saturday around ten in the morning." He said loudly.

Everyone who was interested in the match started whispering that they would go and those who didn't know what soccer was, were questioning them about it. Hogwarts' rumor mill had almost completely forgotten about the Boy-Who-Lived joining the Gryffindor Quidditch team after that.

Two days after denying the Boy-Who-Lived's offer to be friends, Harry stumbled upon an attempt at retaliation. It was during breakfast in the Great Hall as Harry loaded up his plate with bacon and eggs and filled his cup with pumpkin juice. Just as he picked up the silver goblet to take a sip, his ankh heated up. He was confused for a moment, before realizing exactly what the situation was.

Harry looked towards the Gryffindor table and saw Neville Longbottom and Ronald Weasley intently looking towards the Ravenclaw table at him. Harry quickly picked up Kevin's goblet next to him and felt his ankh heat up again.

He quietly whispered to Kevin, "Don't drink from your goblet, it's tainted with something."

Kevin looked towards Harry, saw his serious face and followed his gaze to the Gryffindor table. As soon as he made eye contact with the culprits, he lowered his gaze and spoke in return. "The twin brothers of the redhead are in on it as well. What do you want to do?"

"I'm still thinking, any ideas?" Harry asked.

"How's your aim with that switching spell from Transfiguration?" Kevin inquired quietly.

Harry smiled; he could count on Kevin to think of something like that. The Switching Spell switched two objects with each other obviously, but it worked regardless of obstacles in between the items when performed correctly. The spell was invented originally for lazy witches and wizards to switch their clothing attire. He looked towards the staff table and saw they were all in conversation with someone or busy with their breakfast, their attention wasn't on the hall in the least.

"It's good enough, but I'll need a diversion near the entrance doors." Harry whispered back.

"Done. Good luck....." Kevin stood up, walked towards the entrance and bumped intentionally into an older Slytherin student. As expected, the boy started to make a ruckus that Kevin should watch where he is going and the Gryffindors' attention was momentarily diverted.

Harry moved as lightning. He stood up while drawing his wand, tapping both his and Kevin's goblet twice before making a sweeping gesture towards the goblets of the Boy-Who-Lived and his sidekick. He softly whispered "Transfero Quendam Plura" while he performed the necessary sweep as if dragging their goblets towards the Gryffindor table, all the time visualizing the result. He saw a brief yellowish glow around the four goblets, verifying he did it successfully and quickly sat down to avoid notice, waiting patiently.

Kevin came back immediately after, looking cowed by the talking to from the large Slytherin and sat back down in his seat.

"Everything okay with the Slytherin?" Harry inquired while looking over his shoulder towards the house table where he had sat down.

"Yeah, he's alright. I whispered it would put the Gryffindors in their place to him when I picked up his books." Kevin replied.

They picked up their goblets, deliberately made eye contact with the culprits and toasted in the air. Longbottom and Weasley did the same in return with grins on their faces and all four drank at the same time. Five seconds later, two turkeys were cuckolding at the Gryffindor table and the entire Great Hall burst into a roaring laughter, staff and Gryffindors included. Harry looked towards the stunned Weasley twins and made the naughty disapproving gesture

with a single shaking finger while shaking his head slowly with a fake, disapproving look on his face.

The Weasley twins seemed to take on confused stares before understanding reached them and their looks changed to challenging instead. Harry, recognizing the expression immediately because of his experience with a marauder uncle, groaned out loud. The twins were the resident pranksters of Hogwarts and had developed quite the reputation amongst its population, both staff and students.

"What's wrong?" Kevin asked immediately.

"The twins are taking this as a challenge, so we're going to have to be careful for a while. Don't leave your things out in the open, take a different route to class and our dorm everyday and don't sit in regular spots in the library, classrooms or the Great Hall. Eat your meals with me around, or get them yourself at the kitchens. I'm not sure if you're involved in their eyes, but follow those guidelines and you'll probably be fine." Harry explained.

"You know where the kitchens are!" Kevin shouted out loudly.

Every head at the Ravenclaw table and even some at the Hufflepuff and Slytherin tables turned towards Harry. It wasn't exactly a secret where the kitchens were, but for a first year to know the location was unheard of. Harry just buried his head in his hands and thought to himself, 'I don't have time for a prank war. I'd better owl Remus, he'll have some ideas.'

He picked up his bag and left for class, leaving almost two full tables worth of whispering behind.

The following prank war was brutal. So far, the twins had managed to get Kevin a few times in the beginning until he started to follow Harry's advice. Harry was only bombed once by Peeves the Poltergeist with Dungbombs, supplied by the Weasleys.

Just as the twins moved from behind a statue in an alcove up ahead and started to make fun of his smell, Harry removed his wand and whispered a soft "Refovio" with a circle above his head. He felt a blanket of magic cover the surface of his body from head to toe, before the sensation stopped.

The Refovio Charm was a spell that removed all smells from the body and was invented especially for this purpose. His uncle had told him about it and declared it 'a good one for a prankster to know'. Harry raised his arm and sniffed his armpit comically, but there was no smell at all. He raised his eyebrow towards the twins and spoke up.

"Did you say something?"

It was amusing to see the struggle on their faces. On the one hand, they were disappointed that their prank had failed once again, just as so many other potions, jinxes and hexes applied to places and items that Harry encountered during the day. On the other, they might possibly worship him for being able to circumvent every single prank they could think of.

The student population had quickly become aware of the war between the infamous resident pranksters and their mysterious opponent, but no one could discover who their foe was. Harry made his preparations in an abandoned classroom and sometimes even got the help of the elves. The little creatures were delighted to have so much to clean up after a prank had taken place, hence were all too willing to help. At first, the war was a contest to see who could come up with the best prank, which resulted in the students and staff getting pranked enormously:

The robes of Slytherin students were turned red and gold during dinner one evening which was dispelled quickly after. In return, the Weasley twins were seen sporting silver and green robes that they couldn't change back and lasted that way for three days, thanks to a Latin addition to the Coloring Charm ("Muto Coloro Viridis/Argentum Perpetuus Triduanus").

Professor Flitwick's shoes had gotten charmed to squeak as he walked, much to the amusement of the professor himself who intentionally let them stay that way. Professor Snape's shoes were also charmed but to squish as he walked as if they were filled with water, matching the billowing of his robes. The next morning, Professor McGonagall's Transfiguration classroom was filled with kitty litter up to their knees, much to her dismay. The prank was a suggestion from Remus, who supplied the cat litter by Hedwig with Featherweight and Shrinking Charms. However after that one, Harry

was at the top of McGonagall's suspect list, since it was a repeat of the Marauders.

The entire Ravenclaw table, with the exception of Harry, was one day drugged and unable to say anything for a whole day, due to a Muffling Draught. The next day, Harry enlisted the help of the kitchen elves to imitate the prank and drugged the twins with a Babbling Beverage and a mild Truth Serum. They were spilling their guts about every prank they had played for the past weeks all during lunch and got over a month worth of detention.

Things passed quietly during the next month, mainly since the Weasley twins were in detention every night of the week and were busy with classes and Quidditch during the day. Harry found the break in the prank war a convenient one and used his time to advance even more in Transfiguration.

He was slowly advancing in Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration and was working up gradually in size of the intended result. By now, he was able to transfigure books into small owls, pillows into puppies and a rope into a snake. Harry knew that this branch of Transfiguration was a vital part of Self-Transfiguration but he still had a long way to go before he could even attempt something at that level.

After Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration came Cross-Species Transfiguration, before going to Human Transfiguration and finally the goal of Self-Transfiguration. Harry reckoned that he would have to be able to manage minor Cross-Species Transfiguration by Christmas if he was to have any time for the Animagus Transformation at the end of the school year.

On Halloween, a Thursday, the entire castle was restless for tonight's feast and celebrations, with the exception of Harry. Halloween night had become a double up, wizarding festival day and the celebration of the Boy-Who-Lived's defeat of Voldemort. Ever since Remus told him of the event that indirectly led to his father's demise and his mother's fate, Harry never really felt like celebrating on this day. All day long, Neville Longbottom was lavishing up the attention and it was all Harry could do not to strangle him.

This day also commemorated the death of his parents, but it obviously didn't affect him. In some weird sense of logic, Harry could understand that the loss would affect Neville less than himself, since he still had his mother lying nearly lifeless in a bed and not completely gone. But it was still wrong in Harry's eyes on so many levels for him to celebrate on this day.

His dorm mates were dressing up for the feast and celebrations but Harry had already decided to skip the event. He would probably spend the night in the library, which was perfect since it would be completely empty. Even the evil librarian, Madam Pince, who was ever vigilant of the Restricted Section, would be down celebrating in the Great Hall. Unfortunately, Harry still wasn't competent enough to get around the protective enchantments on the books but that didn't mean he couldn't scan the titles from a distance.

Harry left the library at eleven o'clock in the evening, with a list of titles to search for in Knockturn Alley during Christmas break, to wander around the castle for a bit. The curfew was set for midnight tonight so the celebrations in the Great Hall were probably still going on strong. He passed the time walking around, waiting for his dorm mates to return from the feast, since otherwise he'd be woken up again anyway.

When Harry was walking through the hallway on the fourth floor, he came upon a huge creature from behind, dragging a club over the ground after it. He recognized it as a Troll from 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' and he couldn't figure out how it had gotten here. Harry's first thought to that issue was 'If this is another joke from the Weasley twins, I'll kill them' but it soon changed to dread. He had to warn the staff in the Great Hall but couldn't let the Troll walk around the castle unsupervised.

His answer came to him when the Troll entered a bathroom and he was able to seal the door behind it with muttering "Colloportus" while tracing the outlines of the door in the air with his wand. He wasn't stupid enough to think a standard door lock could stand up to a twelve-foot-tall Mountain Troll. However, as soon as he was halfway down the hallway to warn the professors, he heard a familiar shriek coming from the bathroom.

"Crap." Harry said out loud.

He hurried towards the bathroom, unlocked the door with an "Alohomora" and sprinted inside. He looked around and saw destruction everywhere.

The Troll was standing over Hermione Granger who was shrinking beneath one of the last remaining sinks, frozen in terror with a tearstained face. The bathroom was completely demolished, drenched with water everywhere and not a toilet remaining intact. The Troll had probably done this with his club, since he had raised it once again to hit the cowering Gryffindor.

Harry must have moved on instinct, for he reacted in a flash, flicked his wrist and drew his wand. A quick Blasting Charm with a shouted "Diruo" and a simple flick of his wand took care of the club, blasting it into pieces. He continued though, with a "Diffindo" and a slash aimed for the back of the Troll's neck. The Severing Charm wasn't powerful enough however, since all it caused was grunt from the Troll and a small cut with a few droplets of blood tickling down. It did get the Troll's attention though, since it turned around with a roar and came towards Harry.

"Fuck", he breathed quietly. "So far for that plan, genius. You should have remembered its skin was spell-resistant." He berated himself.

Harry looked around for ideas and noticed the water on the floor. He pointed his wand to the floor and whispered "Glacius" with a clockwise circle movement followed by a thrust of his wand. This was a more difficult spell since it worked with the conjuration of ice-cold air which would be able to freeze the water in moments. He shouldn't have doubted himself however, since the water turned to ice almost immediately and the Troll slipped with his next step. It fell backwards on the floor of the bathroom and was out cold because of it. The thump it made reverberated around the castle and Harry noticed that Hermione had fainted in the back.

Harry didn't stop there however, since he wouldn't let this victory be without spoils. He placed his custom wand back in its holster and flicked his other wrist, withdrawing his more powerful, Nundu wand. He stood on the Troll, aimed his wand at his heart and whispered "Percutio" with a thrust and a malevolent intent.

The Dark Arts had received its name because of their requirement of malevolent intent to work correctly; or at least it said so in 'The Dark

Arts: An Exploration'. Harry had no problems using the Piercing Curse for this purpose and thus pierced the heart of the Troll with the powerful spell. He quickly slipped the wand back in its holster and turned it invisible since he expected the teachers to arrive any time now.

By the time Professors Snape, McGonagall and Quirrell entered the bathroom, Harry was already filling his sixth vial of Troll blood. They looked around the completely destroyed bathroom and noticed Hermione Granger lying unconscious in the back.

"What on earth has been going on here? Mr. Potter, why aren't you in your common room?" McGonagall asked, with cold fury in her voice.

Harry, unaffected by the tone, recounted what happened in an emotionless voice.

"I came upon a Troll in the hallway outside and locked it in this bathroom before going to inform you in the Great Hall. On the way, I heard someone screaming in here and quickly went to aid the person. When I entered through the doorway, Miss Granger was cowering beneath the last sink and the Troll was standing over her with its club raised in the air. I distracted and killed it, she fainted and now I'm gathering its blood as a potion ingredient. You're welcome to help yourself Professor Snape, there's more than enough for the both of us," Harry finished friendly towards the Potions Master, because he had been nothing but professional regarding Harry ever since his first Potions lesson.

Snape looked like he wanted to join Harry very much but a single look from a still furious McGonagall stopped him. Harry noticed the Potions professor seemed to linger on one leg as if he'd injured his other.

"Why didn't you wake up Miss Granger?" The Transfiguration professor asked curtly.

"What makes you think I know how to do the Rennervate Charm?" Harry asked with humor clearly audible in his voice.

All McGonagall did was glance at the dead Troll beneath Harry.

"Oh, right. Well I suppose it wouldn't be beneficial to her health to wake up with a dead Troll at her feet. It's probably a good idea to keep her out until she's lying comfortably in a bed in the Infirmary with a Dreamless Sleep Potion at the ready." Harry said as if he'd only just thought of it and he swore he saw a brief smile on Snape's face.

It did nothing to alleviate McGonagall's anger and irritation however, so she continued. "And why aren't you in your dormitory?"

"Wasn't the curfew extended to midnight because of the celebrations tonight?" Harry asked in return.

"Yes, but all students were instructed by Headmaster Dumbledore to follow the house prefects to their common room for safety. You obviously ignored that..." McGonagall stated.

"I was in the library for most of the night and obviously haven't heard any instructions whatsoever. But if you knew there was a Troll in the castle, wouldn't it have been safer to keep the students together in the Great Hall instead of wandering to their common room?" Harry replied, eager to have the professor see the foolishness of that action.

"While I'm sure that discussion would be amusing to say the least, shouldn't we clean this matter up? My students will want to know that the castle is safe once again." Professor Snape intervened.

"Wait! Shouldn't I get like an award from the school for my 'heroic' actions?" Harry asked merrily, having no delusions whatsoever that he would ever get such a thing for this.

"No," McGonagall started. "Students were instructed to go to their common rooms...."

"Which I never heard," Harry pointed out.

"Since you weren't in the Great Hall!" McGonagall screeched.

"I didn't know the Halloween feast and celebrations were mandatory." Harry inserted calmly.

"Enough! You will return to your common room immediately while we clean up this mess." Snape intervened once more.

"Fine," he said in a defeated tone.

And with that, Harry walked out of the bathroom, carrying six vials of Troll blood and leaving three stumped professors behind wondering just how a first-year had managed to overcome a full-grown Mountain Troll.

When he arrived at the Ravenclaw common room, he was instantly stormed with questions about his whereabouts. However Professor Flitwick, who was taking roll call of the Ravenclaw students, intervened and interrogated Harry himself while the rest was listening in.

"Mr. Potter, can you please explain where you have been?" The Charms professor began.

"Well, the short story is that I decided to skip tonight's feast and celebrations, so I spent most of the evening in the library. I met Hermione Granger on the fourth floor and we even came along Professors McGonagall, Snape and Quirrell. The professors were kind enough to send me here and so here I am." Harry explained in a drawn out way without mentioning the Troll.

"I see. And what does the long version have in it?" Flitwick asked amused by the first-year prodigy in front of him.

"The Troll." Harry said with a smirk as all the eyes in the room widened.

"What do you mean 'the Troll'? What happened? Are you injured anywhere and where is the Troll now?" Flitwick asked in a squeaky tone of panic.

"Perhaps you should confer with your colleagues Professor. I assure you, both Miss Granger and I are perfectly unharmed. The Troll however, isn't."

With that he held up the six vials of red-brown Troll blood. Professor Flitwick recognized the contents of the vials and nodded despondently. He informed the rest of the students that the castle

was safe once again and left Harry to his own devices. Harry quickly went upstairs, ignoring the Spanish Inquisition from Anthony Goldstein, Michael Corner and Terry Boot and closed his curtains. He would inform Kevin in the morning in private if he wanted to know.

What was bothering Harry was how a Mountain Troll managed to get into the castle and to the fourth floor? They were mindless creatures, barely maintaining enough brain capacity to walk around with their clubs. It was obvious that someone had brought them inside, but to what purpose? The thought that the Weasley twins were the culprits seemed farfetched, not to mention beyond their capabilities and the fact that it just wasn't funny.

He decided to ask Kevin who informed them of the Troll in the morning and would interrogate that person to find out if they saw something suspicious. He had a vague feeling in the back of his mind that this might be connected to Dumbledore's announcement of the third floor corridor at the welcoming feast.

The days after

Harry had expected more questions about the day before with the Troll incident, so he had gotten up early and did his morning exercises to evade them. When he had finished his shower, dressed for the day and walked into the Great Hall, the Ravenclaw table fell silent. It seemed that since the original story wasn't available, people had made up one of their own and Harry was now a Troll-wrestling, death defying, reckless, 'Bad Boy' student.

To top it all off, it seemed that Professor Quirrell was the primary suspect behind the Troll entering the castle. Kevin had told him that the Defence professor was absent during the feast and entered near the end of it, shouting 'Troll! In the Dungeons.... I thought you ought to know.....' and fainted afterwards. When Harry asked if someone else was absent, Kevin replied he hadn't noticed anyone besides Harry, Hermione and Quirrell.

Hogwarts rumor mill mentioned that Hermione Granger had tried to help Weasley with the Levitating Charm in class but was scolded in return out of jealousy. The Muggle-born girl was seen crying in the fourth floor bathroom during lunch, but hadn't been seen since. Students were speculating whether she had been killed by the Troll or perhaps even eaten alive.

Harry thought about visiting the girl in the Hospital wing but decided not to, since he didn't want to appear as if she owed him something. She was physically unharmed the day before, so she should be released this morning anyway.

Flying classes on Friday morning were fun as usual, since Harry was so good at it. Madam Hooch, the flying instructor, was even of the opinion that Harry would be better suited for a Quidditch team than the Boy-Who-Lived. Harry spent the time as usual, instructing Kevin and other Muggle-born students who participated in the Saturday morning soccer-match in the skill of flying. Many were nervous about it and just had to be talked to for some confidence but several of the others had the potential to become great flyers.

On the way towards his next class, Harry encountered Neville Longbottom once again...

"I heard you took care of the Troll, Potter. Good job, mate." The Boy-Who-Lived announced loudly among several Gryffindors and Ravenclaws.

Harry immediately knew, with that one statement, what was going on with Longbottom. He was trying to make them seem like friends in the eyes of the others so that he could join in on the spectacle of today that was 'Harry Potter'.

"Who are you again?" Harry asked with a frown on his face.

"I'm Neville Longbottom, the Boy-Who-Lived. And you already knew that!" Longbottom spat out and fumed because of the humiliation that someone in the school would claim they didn't know who he was.

"Ah, of course. So glad I have your approval for the incident yesterday, Longbottom." Harry exclaimed sarcastically.

Many students sniggered as Longbottom stalked off angrily towards the Defense classroom. His sidekick gave Harry a fuming look and walked after the Boy-Who-Lived. Harry chuckled and shook his head, mostly amused but also slightly irritated.

During Defense Against the Dark Arts with the Gryffindors, Harry wrote his latest letter to his uncle. He mentioned the events of the previous day together with his suspicions of the perpetrator, who was standing in front of the class at that very moment. Harry noticed that Hermione Granger was staring at him the whole time with a puzzled expression. It was after the class had ended, during lunchtime, that she approached him. Harry was walking with Kevin to the Great Hall when he was tapped on his shoulder.

"Hi. Can I talk to you for a minute?" Hermione asked shyly.

"Sure." He motioned to Kevin that he would catch up with him later and turned back towards her. "What's up?" Harry asked.

"What happened last night?" She blurted out.

"You mean you don't know what happened? When did you pass out exactly?" Harry inquired, amused by the Muggle-born girl in front of him.

"Well, I remember seeing you coming in through the doorway but I can't remember anything else." The Gryffindor girl told blushing.

"I see..... Well, I distracted the Troll, the professors arrived after that and they took you to the Hospital wing if I'm not mistaken." Harry explained, skipping past the actual fight.

"That's not what I mean. How did you distract the Troll? Troll hide is extremely spell resistant. What spells did you use? Were you hurt anywhere? What happened to the Troll afterwards?" Hermione shot out question after question.

"Wow wow, easy there. I made the Troll lose its balance on transfigured ice from all the water and it fell backwards which knocked it out. I wasn't hurt anywhere and I'm not sure what happened to it afterwards, you'll have to ask the professors that. I heard this morning that you were in there crying because of Ronald Weasley, is everything alright now?" Harry explained calmly and asked out of interest.

Suddenly, the girl tackled him in a hug, while crying her eyes out. "Yes I'm fine, thanks to you. You could have been killed in there. Thank you for saving me."

Harry gently moved his arms around the girl and just held her while she cried. "It's alright, just don't let Weasley get to you anymore. There have to be other students in Gryffindor that will be your friends; just don't act like the bossy know-it-all anymore that you're rumored to be."

Hermione moved back out of the embrace and looked up at Harry with tearstained, but grateful eyes. The support he had given her was welcome, but the underlying message was clearly more important; 'Harry was not her one-and-only friend, but he would be available for her in times of absolute need.'

"Thank you," she said softly, then turned and walked away.

Harry just shook his head with a sigh; some people were just weird. He decided he might as well send his letter to Remus right now and walked towards the Owlery. When he walked up the winding staircase however, Lady Fortune was against him. A girl was

walking down the flight of steps, slipped and fell into Harry, causing him to go down backwards.

He touched down quite painfully on the hard surface of an intermediate landing of the staircase and a pink-haired girl fell on top of him. Harry distinctly felt the young woman's assets leaning on his chest and recognized her after a moment as a Hufflepuff seventh year. She stumbled for a bit, trying to get up unsuccessfully before she made eye contact with Harry and blushed madly.

Harry rolled them over skillfully, until he was leaning over her with him on his side and still looking into her eyes. The girl seemed to freeze for a second for being in this kind of position with a boy.

"Hi. Are you okay?" Harry started cheerfully, completely comfortable in their current position mainly because she wasn't.

"Yeah..... I'm alright. Are you? I'm really sorry for crashing into you like this, but I'm just very clumsy. Can we get up?" The young witch asked.

"I don't know, can we?" Harry replied in return.

With that he got up and offered a hand to help her. The Hufflepuff seventh year took it and hoisted herself up. However Harry, much to her embarrassment, kept hold of her hand and lightly kissed the back of it.

"I'm Harry Potter, nice to meet you Miss?"

"Tonks, just Tonks. And it's nice to meet you too." Tonk replied carefully.

Tonks was a good-looking girl with pink hair and a heart-shaped face. She was about 5'5", only 4 inches taller than Harry. Since she was a seventh year, Harry reckoned she was probably seventeen or perhaps even eighteen years old.

"Well, I better go send this letter. Have a nice day, just Tonks." And with that, he moved past her and took the first steps up the stairs until Tonks called him back.

"Wait!" Tonks called, to which Harry turned around with a raised eyebrow.

"Is it... Is it true about you and the Troll?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

"Yes, it's true." Harry replied back calmly, knowing the reaction it would probably cause.

"What! You really wrestled a Troll and rose up from the dead yesterday?" Tonks inquired unbelievably.

"Of course not. What do you take me for? Can you see me wrestling a Troll and live to tell the story? I'm only a first-year, I barely know any spells at all." Harry exclaimed outrageously, while showing off his slightly muscled, but still small physique.

"I rather doubt that, from what I've heard. So what really happened?"

"It's a long story.... But you've heard about me? Tell me, what does the Hogwarts rumor mill have to report on one Harry James Potter besides the Troll related stories?" Harry asked, immensely intrigued by the rumors about him, which were apparently worthy enough to reach the seventh years.

"You're one of the most popular first-years I've ever heard of, and only partially because of your Saturday soccer matches. Most other first-years mention that you're a prodigy in all classes, definitely the smartest one of them all mind you. And you're friends with a Muggle-born and a Slytherin, a peculiar combination to say the least." Tonks listed enthusiastically.

"Hmm, I guess I am all that." Harry said musingly.

Suddenly he smiled when a thought hit him, "And what do the rumors say about 'just Tonks'? Your first name perhaps?" His smile only grew bigger when he saw Tonks scowl.

"Probably....." she sighed. "Okay, I guess there's no harm in telling you since you'll find out anyway. My name is 'Nymphadora' Tonks, but everyone calls me Tonks unless they wish to be hexed." She took on a threatening glare towards Harry, to prevent him from calling her by her first name, but it didn't faze him in the slightest.

"Nymphadora...." Harry said, trying it out. "I understand why you introduce yourself with just your last name but what about shortening it? I can see your resentment against 'Nym' or 'Nymph' but 'Dora' isn't that bad....."

"No, thank you. I'll keep it to just Tonks. You still need to tell me that Troll story but I have to run, don't want to miss lunch!" With that, she skipped down the stairs, stumbling on the steps once before she found equal grounding. Harry checked the time with a quick "Tempus" and saw that it was indeed only thirty minutes left until the next class.

He leisurely finished his business in the Owlery, giving some attention to the school owl he had selected to make the delivery. He gently scratched the owl's chest while wondering exactly why the third floor corridor was forbidden, if someone let a Mountain Troll in a school full of children as a distraction to get there. 'Perhaps Remus has some ideas', Harry thought to himself as he watched the owl fly away.

Lunch passed quickly enough and all too soon it was time for Herbology. Harry had waved to Tonks at the Hufflepuff table when he entered the Great Hall and as a result, to his amusement, was immediately mobbed with questions from her girlfriends. It seemed he really was mentioned in the Hogwarts rumor mill for seventh years, huh.

Harry told the real story of the Troll incident to Blaise during Herbology, but kept his speculations to himself. If correct, Quirrell's stuttering was an act and who knew how dangerous he really was. As long as Blaise was ignorant, she was safe from harm. She gasped at all the right times in the story and Harry could see that he had become an anchor to Blaise when she hugged him tightly, convincing herself that her friend was alright. He just held her and gently rubbed her back in return, quietly whispering "it's alright, I'm fine" over and over into her ear.

The rest of the afternoon and evening passed quietly, with Harry continuing his self-studies in the abandoned classroom, practicing Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration. Tomorrow would be Saturday, November 2nd and the start of the Quidditch season with the first match, Gryffindor versus Slytherin. He already had plans to dress in green robes and support the Slytherin team, mainly because of

Neville Longbottom playing Seeker for Gryffindor. He knew that he would make enemies by publicly going against the Boy-Who-Lived, but he didn't care. It was because of the match, that soccer was canceled for the weekend and nothing else was planned.

Headmaster's Office

It was Friday evening, November 1st and time for the bimonthly staff meeting. The professors were reporting on the things that happened the past two months and how the students were faring.

"So apart from the Troll yesterday, is there anything else to report?" Dumbledore asked in general.

"The Weasley twins have finished their detentions with Argus and Severus this week. We'll probably see another rise in jokes and whatnot. Other than the Troll, I have nothing worth mentioning." Professor McGonagall replied.

"Anyone else?" The headmaster waited for a moment before continuing. "Very well, how are the first-years adjusting in the school?" he asked kindly.

"A few students reported to the infirmary with minor cases of insomnia because of homesickness, but recovered after a good night's rest with a Sleeping Draught." Madam Pomfrey stated.

"And what of Mr. Longbottom? How is his performance in class? Does he show any talent in a subject?" Dumbledore asked interestedly.

"L-Longbottom is... is a-adept at w-warding off V-V-Vampires but I h-haven't s-seen anything s-s-special yet." Professor Quirrell stammered.

Dumbledore nodded calmly towards his new Defense Professor and looked towards Professor Flitwick, silently asking for information about the Boy-Who-Lived.

"He's average in my class Albus, nothing special like Mr. Potter in Charms at least...." Flitwick answered.

"Minerva? You're his Head of House, what can you tell about him?" Dumbledore queried, asking for her to continue for information about the Chosen One.

"Mr. Longbottom is a mediocre student in my class, indeed nothing like Mr. Potter. He shows no preference to the subject of Transfiguration as far as I've seen and spends most of his time playing games instead of studying. However, he has made friends with almost everyone in Gryffindor of the lower-years, since many of them look up to him and look to him for guidance. The fact that he made the Quidditch team as a Seeker only adds to that." The Deputy Headmistress stated proudly.

Suddenly, Madam Hooch spoke up. "I still can't believe you put him on the Gryffindor team, Minerva. You saw him fly only once during his first lesson, performing a reckless stunt in the air while I specifically told them not to. He can barely stay on his broom during my class and isn't improving in the least. If anyone of the first-years should join a team, it's Mr. Potter. That boy has an instinctual grasp of the technique and is also helpful in class by passing on that skill to other students."

Dumbledore hummed quietly and looked towards his Potions professor, "Severus?"

"Longbottom's an arrogant brat with no talent in Potions whatsoever." Snape replied, saying nothing more since it wasn't required. In his eyes, that said all there was to say about the Boy-Who-Lived.

"Very well, we shall meet again after the Christmas holidays. Filius, Minerva and Severus, please stay behind."

Dumbledore dismissed the rest of the staff and they left quietly, having nothing to say during these standard meetings, at least nothing that wasn't already discussed in their staffroom anyway.

"Now, what exactly happened yesterday with the Troll?"

"As you know, we had to split up to search the castle; Filius took the dungeons, I checked the lower floors and Severus would take the rest while the other professors scattered around. When I reached the third floor, I came upon Severus and Quirinus and together we

heard a rumbling above us. We checked the fourth floor and came upon Mr. Potter, a dead Troll and an unconscious Miss Granger in the girl's bathroom. Mr. Potter was perfectly calm, unharmed and collecting vials of the Troll's blood, whose heart was pierced."

"Mr. Potter gave us the explanation that he was wandering the castle and came upon the fourth floor corridor with a Troll up ahead. He said he locked the Troll inside the bathroom and went to inform us, however he heard a scream coming from the bathroom and quickly went to aid the person inside. He reported he had, and I quote here 'distracted and killed it' while Miss Granger had fainted from shock. We sent him back to his common room, brought Miss Granger to the Infirmary and cleaned up the mess."

"Hmm..... And he shows talent in all of your subjects?" Dumbledore asked about the other candidate who once had the possibility to be the Chosen One of the prophecy.

"That's an understatement....." Flitwick muttered.

"He is even more skilled than James was..... In his third year, that is..... In his first lesson, he changed his match into a perfect needle and back again with barely audible incantations." McGonagall said unbelievably.

Snape remained silent, until Dumbledore looked towards him with a raised eyebrow. "He is an adept brewer, unlike his arrogant father."

"An adept brewer, Severus? Coming from you, that's practically the highest praise possible for a first-year student." McGonagall interceded while Flitwick was beaming with pride over his new first-year Ravenclaw.

"Very well. Please keep an eye on Mr. Potter from now on. I'm curious to see how much he can improve during his education here at Hogwarts." Dumbledore informed his staff and dismissed them afterwards.

Harry got up early once again the next morning to at least get some exercise for the day, since his soccer match was called off, and returned to his dorm for a shower. By the time he was dressed in Slytherin colors and walking towards the Great Hall to get some breakfast, his dorm mates had already left. He heard the rumble

from the Great Hall all the way to the second floor stairway, signifying the excited state of the majority of the students because of the Quidditch match.

He entered the hall as one of the last students to arrive and as soon as he came into view, silence fell over the crowd, even the Slytherins. Harry just smiled, very pleased by the reaction his attire caused to the sheep mind-set of the Hogwarts population, both students and staff. He sat next to Blaise at the Slytherin table and elbowed her softly into her side.

"So, up for some Quidditch today?" Harry asked cheerily.

Blaise just shook her head, looking annoyed but Harry was certain he saw a small smile appear on her face afterwards. He looked around the hall and saw that almost every eye was still on him, having followed his progress from the entrance. Blaise's friends had their jaws hanging open and pretty much every Slytherin had a matching, unbelieving look on their faces.

At the Gryffindor table, Harry saw Longbottom and his sidekick with fuming expressions, Weasley matching the colour of his hair, trying to kill him with their looks. He was surprised to see Hermione Granger looking down at the table, with a small, but undeniable smile on her face.

The Hufflepuffs and his fellow Ravenclaws had disapproving and even some slightly repulsed looks on their faces, except for Kevin and surprisingly, Tonks. Harry had pretty much anticipated that with going against the evil-Slytherin attitude, but didn't expect it from all of his pseudo-friends. At the staff table, he saw Dumbledore and McGonagall frowning at him in disapproval, got a reassuring nod of acceptance from his Head of House and a contemplative look from his Potions professor. Harry didn't know whether all the reactions were because of the anti-Slytherin dogma or the undying support of the Boy-Who-Lived.

The match was surprising though and Harry confirmed his theory about the perpetrator behind the Troll-incident. After half an hour, Neville Longbottom was flying in circles above the brutal game, searching for the familiar speck of gold. When the Slytherin Chasers had taken possession of the Quaffle, Longbottom's broom suddenly began to buckle strangely. At first, Harry thought that the Boy-Who-

Lived was trying to disrupt Slytherin's game with a Quidditch move that was beyond his level, like he did in the beginning of the game until the Gryffindor captain yelled at him. But when his broom kept staggering sideways, as if trying to throw him off, did Harry look towards the teacher's stand on a hunch.

His gut feeling was correct, since he saw Professor Quirrell looking intently towards Longbottom, all the while muttering under his breath. He was surprised however to see Hermione Granger behind the con, pointing her wand at Professor Snape's robes and conjuring a small blue fire that Harry recognized as the Bluebell Flames Charm. Snape's robes caught on blue fire quickly, which didn't affect the robes but still expelled heat and light. The resulting commotion had distracted Quirrell, since it made him lose eye contact for the jinx and the Boy-Who-Lived was relatively safe to fly once again.

The match ended with Terrence Higgs, the Slytherin Seeker, catching the Snitch in an even race with Neville Longbottom. Even though Longbottom had a Nimbus 2000, Higgs was still the more capable flyer and caught the golden ball right in front of his opponent's nose. Slytherin won the game, scoring 220 points against 30 for Gryffindor. Harry cheered with the rest of the Slytherins and discussed something with Blaise that was bothering him on the way back to the castle.

"Why do people care so much about the Seekers? It's as if the whole pitch was centered completely on Higgs and Longbottom? When Longbottom had his shuffle in the air, Flint was able to score five goals in a row and nobody even noticed."

"Well, I'm no Quidditch expert, but I've been to a few games in the past. In professional Quidditch, a Seeker is able to control the game, disrupting the plays of the opponent's Chasers and deciding when or not to end the match by catching the Snitch. They are the star players because of it, even if the tally usually reaches above the 400s. Here at Hogwarts though, the match is usually won already just by catching the Snitch since it scores the equivalent of fifteen goals." Blaise explained patiently, reciting her knowledge of Quidditch.

"I see, so you're saying that the Seekers are the most important players of the game?" Harry asked.

"No, it's just that they're more important when it comes to the finish of the match. Consider a match where the Chasers of one team vastly outclass their opponents. Then, it would be in the best interest of the opponent's Seeker to catch the Snitch as soon as possible. However, a professional Snitch is harder to catch than the one we use here in amateur games, so a professional match usually lasts longer. As such, the Chasers are clearly more valued players in that match, while the Seeker can still be the most important one." Blaise answered.

"Okay, but given all that, what do you think would be more valuable to a professional team, a world-class Chaser who accomplishes good teamwork with his fellow Chasers or a world-class Seeker?"
(1)

Blaise turned to him with a raised eyebrow and stopped walking. "Why do I get the feeling that my answer will have an immense influence on the world of Quidditch?" She asked with a calculative look in her eyes.(1)

Harry only grinned in return.

Blaise smiled back. "A star Seeker is good to watch for the public, easy to be the center of the match and a very tough position to play. However... A star Chaser can do so much more, they can make the match more exciting to watch, work the morale of the crowd and if they're really good, they can win all the games."

"That would be something, wouldn't it?" Harry said in return, gazing thoughtfully into nowhere.

The rest of the weekend continued in apprehensive quietness. Harry received angry glares wherever he went from Gryffindors, as if it was his fault that they had lost the match. He found it rather amusing that he would be blamed now, while he was on the sidelines when he would probably be the actual reason next year, if they lost against Ravenclaw with him as a Chaser on the field.

Quidditch was quickly forgotten by everyone but Slytherin House who felt another year of winning the cup coming up. Harry didn't really care about it since he wasn't playing anyway, but would still support his own house when they played. He didn't think his

chances of joining next year could go any lower if he continued to support the Slytherin team in a match against Ravenclaw.

The last two months of the year passed by and nothing really exciting happened. Remus had written back to Harry about his suspicions of Professor Quirrell, stating he didn't know the man from his Hogwarts years but that Harry should be careful nonetheless. He did give a reasonable suggestion about the third-floor corridor, mentioning that a Gringotts vault had been broken into on Harry's birthday. The vault had been emptied earlier that day and Remus suggested that the contents of that vault could be hidden in the forbidden corridor.

Harry's suspicions of Dumbledore manipulating things only increased with the implication that he possibly moved valuable things to a school full of children in the year that the Boy-Who-Lived started his education. Not only that, he also specifically stated at the welcoming feast that the third-floor corridor was off limits for someone who doesn't want to die a painful death, practically putting a sign on it that said; 'Come on, check it out'.

Harry decided to keep an eye on things but not get drawn into Dumbledore's manipulations. He suspected that the Headmaster had plenty of interest in him already and it wouldn't do to add something to that fact. What the Sorting Hat had told him during his sorting about Dumbledore wanting him in Gryffindor still rung in his mind and his uncle also, after hearing about it, told him not to raise that interest. Remus was repeatedly distrustful of the Headmaster mainly because of the events in the past concerning Harry but this time, Harry completely agreed with his werewolf uncle.

At least his Transfiguration practice was going according to schedule which was a positive aspect of his time at Hogwarts. By the time the Christmas holidays were a week away, he was already working on Cross-Species Transfiguration. Harry didn't have much to practice on, only rats, some mice, fish summoned from the lake, people's pets and owls, so he usually had to use Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration to get the base animals. The result was that his Transfiguration got so much practice that he advanced very rapidly, even quicker than he planned.

It was during the past weeks, whenever he was working on his homework or self-studies in the library, that he noticed Longbottom

and Weasley spending a lot of time searching the bookshelves. It was obvious that they were looking for something but Harry couldn't bring himself to care about it. However one day, when he was returning a book about Animation Charms, a subject closely related to Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration, he overheard a conversation in the next row.

"I'm telling you, it's like the guy doesn't exist. Not even Hermione knows who he is, and she's the biggest know-it-all of the school. We can't ask the teachers, because they'll instantly want to know how we heard about him." Ron complained.

"He might be in one of the books in the Restricted Section, but we'll need to use the cloak to search for it at night." Neville pondered.

Harry quickly realized the Boy-Who-Lived had an Invisibility Cloak. It was a strange coincidence that Dumbledore had his father's cloak and Neville Longbottom just happened have one of his own. He resolved to speak to Dumbledore that night after dinner to inquire after it without assuming anything. He quietly walked back towards the tables and searched for Hermione Granger.

Sure enough, she was sitting two tables down from his with her nose buried in a book. It was a strange recurrence to find the studious Gryffindor in the library more often than most of the Ravenclaws. Harry took a seat at her table and waited patiently for her to notice him.

Granger looked up after about a minute of waiting with an annoyed expression on her face, probably because of Harry's inaction at her table. When she noticed it was Harry, her expression softened and looked at him questionably. Harry, having decided on his course of action for obtaining the necessary information, acted nonchalantly as if it wasn't a big deal.

"The world must be coming to an end....." He began with an overly dramatic sigh. "The day that those two idiots spend more time in the library than me has finally arrived." He nodded to the Boy-Who-Lived and his sidekick.

Hermione looked over at the two 'idiots' that Harry was referring to and snorted quite loudly when she noticed who they were. Some

students looked up from their studies but diverted their attention when Harry caught their stares.

"What's their problem?" He asked casually in a whisper.

"They're looking for someone but I have no idea why or who the guy is." Hermione whispered back, wary of the students around them trying to eavesdrop.

"Who are they looking for?" Harry asked interestedly.

The Gryffindor girl looked at him strangely for a moment, wondering why this was of interest to Harry, before answering cautiously.

"Nicolas Flamel....."

That brought a look of surprise to Harry's face. He immediately connected the dots and came to a shocking revelation. Nicolas Flamel was a famous alchemist and the only known maker of the Philosopher's Stone, a substance capable of producing the Elixir of Life and turning any metal into gold. That had to be what was hidden on the third-floor corridor, since Flamel and Dumbledore were close friends and partners in the subject of Alchemy. That Dumbledore would move an item of such value here in the year that the Boy-Who-Lived started at Hogwarts couldn't be a simple coincidence. Harry decided to mull things over during the Christmas break before determining his course of action.

He quickly schooled his expression into a neutral one and tried to steer the conversation clear of his knowledge.

"I wonder why they are looking for him," he mused out loud intentionally.

Harry barely managed to avoid an interrogation from Granger after he had received the knowledge he wanted to have. It was obvious she realized that Harry knew who Nicolas Flamel was but fortunately didn't question him about it. He wanted to keep as many people unaware as possible of exactly what was hidden on the third-floor corridor until he had a strategy for what to do.

That evening during dinner, he walked up to the staff table and asked Dumbledore if they could speak in his office regarding a

private matter. Dumbledore agreed jovially, eyes twinkling at full power, projecting the grandfatherly image for his students towards the Great Hall and told Harry to come up after dinner. Harry rolled his eyes, having realized exactly what the old man was up to and turned towards his Head of House.

"Professor Flitwick," he started loud enough to be overheard by the rest of the staff. "Could you tell me the password to the Headmaster's office?"

The Charms professor and a few other teachers chuckled appreciatively, mainly because of the failure of one of their employer's strange quirks, and told Harry that the password was "Lemon drop".

The meeting went pretty much as Harry expected.....

"Good evening, Headmaster." Harry started politely as he entered the majestic office, having received a "Come in, Mr. Potter" after knocking. Harry wondered how Dumbledore knew it was him, sure he had asked for the meeting but the headmaster sounded as if he was absolutely certain that Harry was indeed the person behind the closed door.

He looked around the office, amazed at the grandiose appearance of everything cluttering around. There were shelves behind the desk filled with books that were probably rare, causing Harry to have to restrain himself from trying to read the titles on the spines. On the left side were knickknacks of all sorts spinning, whistling and puffing out smoke every now and then, indicating to Harry that they were obviously monitoring something. 'Probably the wards', Harry thought to himself. On the right side wall were portraits of the previous headmasters of Hogwarts lined up next to each other, seemingly all dozing quietly. A magnificent golden perch stood in the front, currently deserted by the Phoenix Remus had told him that was the headmaster's familiar. And then his gaze fell upon the amused, twinkling eyes belonging to the current owner of the office and Harry flushed slightly.

"I apologize," Harry said quietly.

"That's quite alright, young man. My office seems to have that effect on the majority of people that come here for the first time. Please,

have a seat. Lemon drop?" Dumbledore offered with a gesture towards a bowl of round yellow candies.

Harry declined politely and sat down in a comfortable chintz armchair which was in front of the headmaster's desk. "Now, what can I do for you, Mr. Potter?" Dumbledore asked with a grandfatherly smile.

"I was wondering when you were planning to return my father's invisibility cloak to me. The goblins informed me that you had it in your possession to study it when my parents went into hiding and haven't returned it yet." Harry asked as politely as possible, trying not to make it sound like the demand that it really was.

"I see." Dumbledore started dejectedly but Harry noticed a twitch of his left eye, which he surmised was from annoyance. "I was uninformed that the goblins were aware of your father's remarkable cloak."

"I have no doubt that you intended to return it to me eventually but since it was something of my father, I'd rather have it now to remember him by." Harry explained, smiling with an expression that Remus said he recognized as the up-to-no-good look of James Potter.

"I'm sure....." Dumbledore chuckled but it was rather forcibly, Harry noticed.

"Very well....." Dumbledore said with a sigh of defeat. "It'll take me some time to locate it so I hope you don't mind if I returned it after the Christmas holidays?"

"Not at all. Did you find anything out of the ordinary, during your examination of the cloak? I was under the impression that invisibility cloaks were, while unusual enough, not an extremely rare item in the Wizarding World." Harry inquired, hitting the nail on the head at once though not realizing it.

Dumbledore didn't show any sign of dishonesty when replying, "The cloak is of an extraordinary quality which is what prompted me into requesting to study the item. I haven't been able to ascertain anything noteworthy about it though."

Harry already didn't trust the headmaster so he vowed he would inspect the cloak himself once he had it in his possession. "Thank you, Headmaster. Should I come by to retrieve it after the break?"

"I don't think that'll be necessary but my door is always open for students such as yourself if there is anything you need." Dumbledore said dismissingly.

"Thank you. Have a nice holiday, sir." Harry replied, stood up and walked out of the office.

Harry suspected that Dumbledore had given the cloak to Neville and would need the time to get it back from the Boy-Who-Lived. He would never be able to prove it of course but the situation gave the idea a legitimate probability. Harry had fashioned his words in such a way that if Dumbledore denied his request for the return of an heirloom, he would come out as the villain. Harry counted on the fact that the headmaster would always try to avoid that outcome. He was still wary though that Dumbledore might try to give him a different cloak but Remus had described it in close detail to prevent exactly that.

It was during breakfast the next morning that he received a letter from his uncle which put a smile on his face. He gave Hedwig some well-deserved attention by scratching her chest and stroking her feathers, while feeding her some bacon from his plate. Harry saw several girls looking admiringly towards his owl and Hedwig seemed to enjoy the reverence. He untied the letter and let her continue to clean his plate of leftovers.

Harry looked around for any eavesdroppers, put his wand on the letter and quietly whispered "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good" to which words became visible and he started to read.

Dear Prongslet,

How have you been? Do you still suspect Professor Quirrell? I haven't been able to find out anything about the contents of vault 713 at Gringotts, the one that was robbed. I'm sorry but I can't go around inquiring about it since it will look suspicious if I do.

On the positive side, I'm almost finished with the inn. The bar is finished, only stocking it is still required and the bedrooms have

been taken care of. Blinky has been a big help in decorating every room and making lists of what I still need to purchase. I'm thinking of taking on my own elf for staffing the kitchen and doing the cleanings, but Blinky said that as long as you'll live here, she will take care of those tasks.

The goblins have constructed a huge basement which is divided into two sections, one of which will provide the facilities for during the full moon. I've managed to obtain several protective cages that have been reinforced and charmed to contain the people during their transformations. You'll supply the Wolfsbane Potion and that's everything taken care of for werewolf customers. The other side of the underground level has been set up with accommodations for our vampire guests, together with a self-service bar which will be stocked with blood.

It's possible to have the opening after New Years which means I'll have to expose it to the public and I was hoping you'd help with that. I'm sure that the advertisement for a business of Lord Potter will be treated better by the Daily Prophet than if the request came from me.

Thanks for everything cub and I'll pick you up next Saturday at King's Cross station.

Remus

Harry quickly said "Mischief managed" with his wand on the letter and started thinking about his request to the Daily Prophet. It needed to be written in the dignified tone customary for purebloods, since he was writing it as 'Lord Potter'.

I'm really sorry for making Tonks a year younger, but I had to have Harry meet her and couldn't find a way. This way, Remus and Tonks differ 14 years instead of 13. I'm still not sure if they're going to hook up like in 'Knowledge is Power'.

(1) I got part of this conversation from 'Knowledge is power', I know but it's an important one.

Christmas Break

The train ride home was fortunately a quiet affair. Harry sat in a compartment with Kevin, Blaise and her friends Daphne and Tracey in comfortable silence and didn't receive any unwelcome visits. Longbottom was still angry with him for the Quidditch match and had tried to set the Weasley twins on Harry once again, according to the Hogwarts rumor mill. The Weasley twins had refused audibly in the Gryffindor common room, probably since the notorious pranksters were still on probation of sorts with the professors.

Malfoy was acting strangely ever since September 1st and he was starting to creep Harry out. He had expected the blonde pureblood to be a prick like Longbottom was but it seemed that Harry's sorting into Ravenclaw House caused him to keep his distance. Blaise mentioned that while he ranted plenty about pureblood superiority and disgusting Muggle-born students in the Slytherin common room, he never once spoke to her about her friendship with Harry and Kevin.

This time, Malfoy just nodded in their direction and quickly moved on when he passed their compartment in the train. Harry couldn't figure out what the boy was trying to achieve but whatever it was, he certainly wouldn't become his new best friend. Draco Malfoy was a pureblood bigot, the son of a Death Eater, a pompous prick and bully to everyone besides Harry plus his aunt was Bellatrix Lestrange née Black who was directly responsible for his mother's fate.

Harry was grateful though for being left alone, which is basically what he wanted from such people. He still had the issue of what to do about the Philosopher's Stone to think about and couldn't seem to come to a decision. It was obvious that Quirrell was after it and that Longbottom and his sidekick would eventually be drawn into the whole mess. If his suspicions were correct and Dumbledore did indeed set up this whole thing for something that had to do with the Boy-Who-Lived, then it was better if Harry didn't get involved.

But he had quickly dismissed that thought. He was aware of what was hidden on the third-floor corridor so he was already involved and there was nothing he could do to avoid it. The fact that an important item such as the Philosopher's Stone was at risk and

could possibly end up in the hands of someone like Quirrell was disturbing to say the least.

When the train was about fifteen minutes away from King's Cross, Harry noticed that Daphne was fidgeting in her seat next to Blaise. Harry turned to Blaise and raised a single eyebrow in question. Blaise on her part saw that Harry noticed Daphne fidgeting in her seat and elbowed her in the side.

Daphne looked up in surprise and made eye contact with Harry. He was bewildered to see a look of apprehensiveness on the normally stoic witch and became slightly concerned for the girl.

"Daphne, Are you alright?"

Daphne seemed to sigh in defeat and replied. "Potter.... Harry, can I talk to you in private for a minute?"

"Sure," Harry granted and stood up, sliding open the door for Daphne to exit first.

Daphne seemed surprised by the gesture and walked out slowly while maintaining eye contact with Harry as long as possible. Harry looked back towards Blaise, who just shrugged, and then followed after the beautiful blonde into an empty compartment. Because of several students staying at school for the holidays, the Hogwarts express was barely three quarters full.

Daphne closed the door of the compartment with a Locking Charm, after checking to see if anyone was near enough to eavesdrop. She tucked her wand away, drew in a deep breath and started to speak.

"The reason I wanted to talk to you alone is because of something I don't want anyone else to know. Tracey and Blaise know of course but I was hoping that you could keep it to yourself." She finished while looking nervously in question towards Harry.

Harry scrutinized the normally indifferent girl with an inquisitive eye and nodded after a moment. He took out his wand slowly while keeping eye contact with Daphne in reassurance and turned towards the door. He added a "Colloportus" and a very soft "Muffliato" with two counterclockwise circles as the necessary wand movement and gestured for her to continue.

Daphne raised an eyebrow at the 'Sound Distortion Charm', probably because she never heard of it because of the origin of the spell. It was one of the custom spells that Remus had told him was a Marauder's favorite.

"Impressive", Daphne murmured softly to herself but Harry still heard it.

"My parents are coming to pick me up in a few minutes at King's Cross and they have asked me to make friends with students from what are considered 'atypical circles' for members of the Greengrass family."

Here she took a deep breath before continuing with her explanation.

"My father has never been, and will never be a Death Eater nor does he uphold their lack of morals and values. However the other side, with Headmaster Dumbledore as 'leader of the light' followed by the various 'light families', also holds no appeal to him whatsoever. I realize that the Potters are a known 'light family', but you seem different and are unlike a member of the Weasley family for example."

Here Harry snorted quite loudly.....

"What I'm trying to say..... No, ask you is if you'll agree to let me introduce you to my parents as a friend of mine?" Daphne finished nervously.

"Of course, but am I not already your friend? I know that you're usually rather cold to me but I don't really care. You're one of Blaise's best friends, which makes you a friend of mine..." Harry reasoned.

Daphne smiled. "Blaise said you would say that. Thank you.... Harry." She added his first name with a little hesitation but Harry could hear the acceptance in it.

"You're welcome Daphne, anytime....."

With that, Harry removed the charms on the door and gestured once again for Daphne to lead the way. Daphne smiled warmly in return,

something that he wasn't quite used to from the beautiful young witch but made her seem all the more gracious.

When Harry entered his own compartment once again, Daphne was already sitting next to Blaise. He glanced at the black-haired girl he had befriended on their first trip on the Hogwarts Express and nodded to her. Blaise beamed in return, happy that two of her friends had enhanced their friendship of sorts. The train was already starting to slow down and Harry helped the girls with their trunks before shrinking his own and putting it in his pocket.

He followed the line of students out of the train and was amused to see even the older students lugging their trunks behind them. A few had them on a Hover Charm but as far as Harry could see, no one had even thought of shrinking it or putting a Featherweight Charm on it. He could never believe the absence of logic in so many people, yet time and time again it was demonstrated right in front of him.

The five were some of the last students to exit the train and several students had already left with their parents. He said goodbye to Tracey, Kevin and Blaise and wished them all a happy Christmas before turning to Daphne. He drew in a breath and raised his posture, before offering his left arm to the girl and he was amused to see her blush before taking it. She steered the both of them towards a large, imposing man and an attractive woman who were obviously Daphne's parents.

"Father, mother. May I introduce a friend...." Daphne spoke respectfully but was cut off by Harry.

".....Lord Harry James Potter. It is a pleasure to meet you, Lord and Lady Greengrass." Harry intervened and slightly bowed his head in respect.

He could see he had surprised the man and Daphne which meant that Blaise had kept his secrets from her girlfriends. Blaise obviously didn't know everything about Harry but this was bound to come out eventually so Harry didn't see the harm in telling her. As for the introduction to Daphne's parents, he reasoned that his title would come out with the article in the Daily Prophet anyway.

"Likewise, Lord Potter. Forgive my surprise, but my daughter neglected to mention she had befriended a Lord." Daphne's father spoke and acknowledged him in the same way.

"She didn't, since she was unaware of that little fact. And please, call me just Harry, I'm only eleven years old." He turned to Daphne's mother, "I can see where Daphne gets her beauty from, Lady Greengrass...."

Harry took the hand of the striking woman with long blond hair similar to Daphne's and lightly kissed the back of it. He was pleased to hear an amused laugh coming from her, meaning he had already wormed his way into the woman's good graces.

"My Lord," She said in greeting and curtsied lightly.

Harry noticed Remus watching from twenty feet away with an amused look and motioned for him to come closer. He introduced his uncle to the Greengrasses and was surprised to see that they already knew each other from their Hogwarts days. After the adults had caught up with each other, the two went to leave before he was pulled in a small hug by Daphne.

"Thank you, Harry" she whispered softly.

"Anytime, Daphne. Happy Christmas." He whispered back in her ear which caused a shiver to run down her spine and Harry broke from the hug.

As he walked away with Remus towards the apparition point, he could hear one last comment from the matriarch of the family and her daughter's response which brought a smile to his face.

"I like him."

"Mum!" Daphne yelled.

The inn was absolutely amazing; there was just no other way of describing it.

The bar section, that is the part where you entered the inn, was old-fashioned with antique tables and comfortable armchairs made from a dark, but warm-coloured kind of wood. The front wall was divided

in several open booths providing a small manner of privacy. On the side was an open floor for activities such as dancing, together with a small stage where an artist or several could perform. On the side of the stage stood a stylish grand piano, though it wasn't as beautiful as Harry's own which was currently still in the Potter family vault.

The bar counter had several stools along its length and was made from a beautifully polished, dark kind of wood. The wall behind it had a large mirror and shelves stacked with glasses and a large collection of liquor bottles, both muggle and wizarding, were on display. Towards the back was a round table for eight providing an ideal place for regulars to play cards or something like that. Remus had gone all out for the entrance room and the whole pub seemed to radiate warmth and prosperity for its guests.

There was a doorway behind the bar towards the kitchen which was designed to Blinky's preference. Next to the bar was a door with a sign on it that said private and two stairs next to that, one leading up and the other went down. Upstairs, Remus and Blinky had outfitted every bedroom and joint bathroom with luxurious furniture, but nothing outrageously inappropriate, which gave a homely and extremely comfortable feel to it. Only when Harry asked his uncle if the rent for a room wouldn't be expensive this way, did Remus explain the price differences between the Muggle and Wizarding World.

It seemed that things like furniture, bedding sheets, and other contrivances were extremely expensive in Wizarding stores compared to Muggle Interior Design stores. Remus and Blinky had purchased all their commodities in the Muggle world and applied some small transfigurations, Unbreakable Charms and other magic to the interior design of the rooms.

The basement was huge and distinctly divided into two sections. The facilities for werewolves during the full moon were safely behind reinforced doors and supplied with permanent Cushioning Charms on the walls. The housing would be more or less free of charge, only compensating for the ingredients of the Wolfsbane Potion and if necessary board expenditures. Remus remembered all too well how difficult it could be for a werewolf to make a living in the Wizarding World and had no desire to make that even harder.

The accommodations for vampires were still rather blank, only outfitted with standard furniture and facilities including a constant blood supply from the nearest Muggle blood bank. The two couldn't really relate to the beings so they had planned to adjust it to their preferences when vampires were to actually start staying at the inn.

The private section of the inn contained the residence section for Remus and Harry. There was a large, comfortable living room behind the door with a hallway leading towards Remus's and Harry's room. A kitchen wasn't required since Blinky already had her abode to make dinner for her master. Harry's bedroom was still empty except for a temporary bed, since he requested that he himself could get to furnish it to his own design. There were two doors to the side of his room, one of which led to a fully outfitted, lavish bathroom that even had a bath and the other opened up to a large walk-in closet.

Remus's grin probably couldn't get any wider as he noticed his nephew getting more and more astonished with every room that he saw. When Harry turned towards him, he spoke just one word.....

"How?"

"The goblins of Gringotts were impressed with your business proposal so they decided to provide help as an investment and negotiated a discount in return, since they expect their employees to become regular customers here. They performed massive Expansion Charms on the basement and the rooms upstairs and I just put it to good use. They also assisted with the security and protection of the werewolf section and put up various wards." Remus explained.

"What kind of wards are we talking about?" Harry asked in his Ravenclaw curiosity.

"There's an Aggressiveness Repellent ward on the entire property, together with Anti-Apparition, Anti-Theft and Anti-Intruder wards. The front door is enchanted with an Unbreakable Charm and a Silencing Charm against any 'outdoor influences'. There's also a protection spell on the building to prevent it from burning down to the ground together with Reinforcing Charms on the walls."

"Why?"

Remus sighed and decided not to leave his nephew in the dark, ever. "The goblins anticipate that when the business is up and running, people will attempt to destroy it. People like prejudiced witches and wizards who are against dark creatures but also groups like the werewolf clans that don't wish to fully integrate in the Wizarding World."

"Oh, right." Harry finished dumbly.

"So, I thought you made friends with a Blaise Zabini? Imagine my surprise when I arrive at the platform and see you working your charms on Danielle Greengrass." Remus asked with a smirk, completely changing the subject.

"Yeah, that was a favour for Daphne but I didn't see Blaise's parents now that you mention it. We separated after exiting the train, but I did notice Kevin leaving with his family when I was talking to the Greengrasses." Harry said confusedly.

He absently took out his matchbox-sized trunk from his pocket and placed it on the bed. He drew his custom wand, tapped the trunk and muttered "Finite" before Remus could stop him. The trunk returned to its usual size but his uncle quickly grabbed the wand from his hand. Harry looked towards the werewolf in surprise and noticed his wide eyes and that he was looking towards the open window.

"What?"

"You did magic, Harry. It's the holidays...." Remus said in a panicky voice.

"Oh fuck. What happens now?" Harry asked with a sigh, knowing that he would be reprimanded but also that a simple 'Finite' would never result in his expulsion from Hogwarts.

You're supposed to get a official warning letter from the Improper Use of Magic Office at the Ministry of Magic, usually it arrives within a minute or so....." Remus stated confused.

"Hmm, that's interesting. I wonder if it has got anything to do with the wand...." Harry murmured, remembering Professor McGonagall suspiciously asking him whether or not he bought it at Ollivander's.

"That might just be the case." Remus told him, knowing what his nephew was talking about since Harry had written about that conversation with his Transfiguration professor.

"Or perhaps they don't mind us performing magic during Christmas break? They haven't given us the note yet that says we can't do magic during the holidays..." He trailed off.

"No, that's not it," Remus shot down immediately. "Your father got a warning for cleaning his bedroom with magic in his first year on Christmas Day. Perhaps it was just the 'Finite' that didn't register, do something else," he ordered Harry.

"You're actually telling me to do magic during the holidays?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Yes, now get on with it, or didn't you learn anything at Hogwarts?" Remus ordered while smirking, knowing his nephew was probably far ahead of the other first-year students.

Harry smirked back with a devilish gleam in his eyes that Remus didn't like one bit.

The next moment he was being renervated by his nephew who was leaning over him.

"I don't know what it is exactly, but I haven't seen any owls yet and it's been twenty minutes already." Harry mentioned, letting his uncle know that he had been unconscious for a while.

"I take it that you put those Defence books I sent you to good use then?" Remus asked rhetorically, but also amazed at the same time that his nephew could do the Stunning Spell, a fifth year Defence spell!

The rest of the night continued with Harry telling his uncle the goings-on at Hogwarts that he hadn't mentioned yet in his letters. He kept the knowledge of what was hidden on the third-floor corridor to himself, since otherwise it would just limit his choices. Remus could

forbid him to go after it, but Harry had been thinking today of doing exactly that. If he could somehow manage to get the stone without disturbing any of the protections on it, he wouldn't draw attention to himself and the stone would be safe.

The few days before Christmas Harry spent his time shopping in the Muggle world for his room, getting a Christmas present for his uncle and planning the visit from someone of the Daily Prophet. He had written a suitable request for a reporter to do an article about the opening of the new business of Lord Potter, the 'Blood Moon Inn'. A reporter named Andy Smudgley had responded that he would like to convene at the Lord's convenience to inspect the new business and write up an informative article about the establishment.

The furniture Harry had selected for his room wouldn't arrive until a week and a half later, since it was the holidays and thus, Harry had to wait a while with his room project. He spent his days wandering around Diagon Alley and his nights reading in the living room. One afternoon, he heard his name being called from behind him and turned around to see Wayne Hopkins approaching him.

Wayne Hopkins was a quiet Hufflepuff and one of the half-bloods who regularly participated in the Saturday morning soccer matches. His father was a wizard but his mother was a squib, and it was the latter that had insisted Wayne be raised in the Muggle world. As a result, Wayne had played soccer during Muggle primary school and was quite the talent on the field.

"Hey Harry, what are you doing here?" Wayne asked.

"I live nearby and had nothing else to do so I thought I'd check out Diagon." Harry told the boy, leaving out the fact that he lived in Knockturn Alley nowadays. "What are you doing here?"

Wayne held up his broom and started explaining. "A few others and I regularly come here in the holidays to play Quidditch on the amateur pitch of 'Puddlemere United' behind the Alley. I was on my way home when I saw you wandering around aimlessly."

Harry smiled. "Are you any good?"

Wayne smirked in return. "Do you play?"

"I might have thrown around a Quaffle or two, so yes." Harry said mysteriously with a grin.

Wayne only grinned wider. "The group has scheduled another match on Boxing Day if you want to join in but we can play some one-on-one tomorrow if you've got the time and a broom...."

"Definitely!" Harry agreed. "So, who else plays in these matches?"

The two got in a conversation about the Quidditch players at Hogwarts and those who joined the games usually. Harry quickly realized that the players were older students mostly and some even played on the house teams at Hogwarts. He reckoned that it would prove to be an interesting match and the rest of his Christmas break would probably be spent on that pitch he didn't know about before.

Christmas day soon came which meant Harry and Remus were visiting his mother in St. Mungo's Hospital. Remus took a few minutes to observe his best friend's wife and checked her room before leaving his nephew alone with his mother. Harry quietly told her all about the past year, the inn and everything that happened at Hogwarts. He confessed his suspicions of Headmaster Dumbledore and his plot with the Philosopher's Stone, together with his discovery of the true nature of Professor Quirrell.

Nurses came into the room throughout the day to check up on Lily Potter but it only interrupted him for a minute before Harry continued while holding his mother's hand. When it was time for dinner, he kissed his mother on her forehead and quietly whispered "Thank you, mom", before leaving the room with tears in his eyes.

The following day was the day of the match and Harry was introduced to Cedric Diggory, a third-year Hufflepuff and seeker for their team at Hogwarts; Susan Bones, a cute redhead from Hufflepuff in Harry's year; Oliver Wood, the Gryffindor team captain and Keeper from fifth year; Angelina Johnson, one of Gryffindor's Chasers who was third-year; Cho Chang, the pretty, Chinese second-year Ravenclaw with long black hair who Su Li was talking to at the welcoming feast and Roger Davies, current third-year Ravenclaw and Chaser for the team.

There were a few other students from above the third-year but Harry didn't recognize them personally. He had only recognized Oliver

Wood from the Gryffindor-Slytherin Quidditch match but besides Tonks and some of the Ravenclaw fifth years from tutoring sessions, Harry hadn't had much interaction with the upper year students.

Harry was quickly accepted into the fold when he showed off his talent on a broom and the match was a great success. It seemed they had received an audience during the game because when Cedric finally caught the snitch, a tremendous applause was heard coming from the ground. The group agreed to play again after New Years and parted on friendly terms, even though the team Harry was on had slaughtered the other.

The next day, Remus and Harry met Andy Smudgley, while suitably dressed, at the Leaky Cauldron. Harry had specifically steered clear of any clues leading to the location of their inn to prevent any prejudice from the reporter beforehand. The journalist was overly friendly towards him and practically ignored Remus the whole time, something Harry found amusing and annoying at the same time.

They led him towards their inn and after a slight pause, managed to get him through Knockturn Alley and to the entrance door. Remus gave the man a tour of the guest accommodations while Harry added his two cents now and then, signaling that Mr. Lupin was the manager and in his employ since he himself was still at Hogwarts.

After the tour, while they were seated at one of the tables in the bar section, Harry answered the man's questions. The bomb dropped with the first question and Mr. Smudgley was speechless for about a minute when he heard who the designated clientele was. Harry slipped the reporter a sack filled with 50 galleons after the interview, indicating that he could pick up a similar bag here if the article was favorable and politely showed him out the door.

When he returned he found his uncle pacing in the living room out of nervousness for the next day. Harry tried to get him to calm down a bit but failed completely so he just slipped some Sleeping Draught into his drink after dinner. Five minutes later, he levitated Remus out of his chair and towards his bedroom and returned to his reading on the couch with a smile. Everything was taken care of for the opening tomorrow which was at noon. The bar was fully stocked, complete with an emergency medical potions supply including the Sleeping Draught and he was sure things would go alright.

The next morning, Saturday the 28th of December, saw the young lord sitting at their breakfast table in the living room. He was quietly drinking his coffee with the Daily Prophet in front of him when he suddenly heard that Remus had awoken.

"Harry Potter!" His uncle screamed from his bedroom and, if he were to be in the living room at that moment he would have seen his nephew's smug grin.

Only seconds later Remus stormed into the living room. "You did it to me! I can't believe you. You drugged a marauder with Sleeping Draught..."

Harry's only reply was to fill another cup of coffee for his uncle and to set it down in front of an empty seat next to the Daily Prophet. It was opened on the third page with a headline plainly noticeable saying 'Blood Moon Inn opening today for all magical beings!'

The article went on.....

Yesterday afternoon, this reporter was invited by Lord Potter to inspect his new business enterprise. Lord Harry Potter, age 11, has recently invested in a property on Knockturn Alley and fashioned it into a luxurious inn called the 'Blood Moon Inn'. The inn, which is opening at noon today while under the management of known werewolf Remus Lupin, has as the name suggests accommodations for various dark creatures and welcomes practically all magical beings. The inn is luxuriously furnished and radiates a welcoming aura, but is still easily affordable at rates similar to the Leaky Cauldron.

When asked about its clientele, Lord Potter had this to say: "There will not be any kind of prejudice allowed in the inn whatsoever. It is my intention to present a social establishment which has safe and well-equipped accommodations for ANY who seek short-term overnight stay. The pub naturally is open to anyone who wishes to visit for a drink and/or a meal, whether breakfast, lunch or dinner."

An establishment such as this has never been set up and this reporter wonders whether there is a demand for such an enterprise. However we, of the Daily Prophet, wish Lord Potter prosperity with his new business and will be there this afternoon for the opening of the 'Blood Moon Inn'.

Andy Smudgley

Remus looked up after with tears in his eyes from happiness. "This is brilliant," was all he said.

"I know. Now, let's get dressed and prepare the place because it's already half past ten." Harry said and went to get ready for the official opening. His uncle stayed seated for a while and kept staring at the article with an unbelieving expression.

That afternoon, both of them were surprised to see a small crowd of people waiting outside to be allowed into the pub. It was an enormous success. People got to see a normal bedroom for guests and were given a cup of coffee free of charge but many stayed after that and some even had a meal. Remus had set up a small variable menu, depending on the season of the year and it seemed that it was a hit. Nobody wanted to stay overnight, but that was expected since it was only the first day.

That night after closing up, Harry was hugged by his uncle out of joy and heard him muttering "thank you" repeatedly. Harry replied saying that he only made it possible financially but that Remus had himself to thank for all the work he had done for the inn.

The rest of the break passed without incident. Harry played another match of Quidditch with the group at the amateur pitch which was easily accessible through Diagon Alley. He also managed to get his room furnished with the help of some unnoticed Shrinking, Engorgement and Levitating Charms when his order had arrived at the store. It still wasn't finished but he had the important furniture set up which only left minor things such as the decorations that were still missing.

The inn kept on a growing stream of wizarding customers after word of pleased reviews got out from overnight guests. However so far, only some goblins visited the pub and a few werewolves came by to check out the full moon accommodations. Though Harry did have an interesting first conversation with a vampire one night which might possibly lead to several other vampire customers.....

It was late in the evening, fully dark outside and Harry was sitting at the bar with his book 'Guide to Advanced Transfiguration'. He was

reading the chapter on the Animagus transformation, while keeping Remus company who was serving the small number of late customers.

"How far along the process are you?"

Harry suddenly heard someone ask next to him with a slight French accent. He hadn't noticed anyone take the seat next to him but there was undeniably a tall, handsome man with black hair sitting beside him.

"How do you know I'm not just browsing the book? I'm only eleven years old, you know...." He replied with a single raised eyebrow.

The man chuckled and signaled to Remus who nodded and turned to get the man's order. Harry hadn't heard him ask for anything but it was obvious that Remus knew what the man wanted.

"You've been studying every single line of that one page for the past three minutes that I've been sitting next to you. If you were just browsing the book, then you would have noticed me and turned the page already. As for your age, I don't know why that would matter, do you?" The man said with a knowing grin.

Harry grinned back and offered his hand to the man. "I'm still working on Cross-Species Transfiguration. I'm Harry Potter."

The man took his hand and introduced himself as well. "It makes it a lot easier if you combine studying Animation, a branch of Charms with that particular branch of Transfiguration. And my name is Olivier Jasper Moreau. Nice to finally meet you, Mr. Potter."

"Please, call me Harry. And I started Animation charms during my study of Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration since it stood listed as a recommendation...." Harry trailed off when he noticed that his uncle had put a glass of red wine in front of the man, only the wine seemed thicker. He quickly recognized it as blood and turned back to the man. "You're a vampire," he breathed.

"Is that a problem? I was under the impression that you didn't hold any prejudices against my kind..." The man asked with a fanged grin, but Harry noticed it was forced from the disappointment clearly visible in the man's dark brown eyes.

"NO," Harry shouted a bit too loud. He flinched at his own outburst and continued at a more appropriate volume level. "No, it's not a problem at all. It's just that I've never met one before and I was curious about your kind in general."

He turned to Remus who was not very inconspicuously listening in to their conversation. "You knew...." His uncle only smirked in return and Harry shook his head in annoyance.

He turned back to the vampire, "I have so many questions that I could probably hold you here for a week and still not know enough."

"I see...," the man took a sip of blood from the glass, sighed appreciatively and nodded to Remus in gratitude. "What is it that you would like to know? I have a couple of hours to spare and was actually curious about you myself after that interesting article."

Harry flinched once more. The 'article' that he referred to was a follow-up from the Daily Prophet of the opening day. It mentioned the success of the event and accounted the heated discussion between Harry and a stuck-up pureblood wizard about letting 'Dark Creatures' into such a fine establishment. The quarrel ended with Harry shouting quite loudly after the man as he left; "They're all human beings!"

Mr. Moreau, or Jasper as Harry had to call him in Britain, answered all of Harry's questions and Harry concluded by asking for the man's advice on the vampire accommodations. He showed him around in that section of the basement and explained that both Remus and himself had no idea what the preferences of vampires were so they had left it mostly blank because of it.

Jasper had really come through and made several tips about the interior decoration of the place. He advised to paint the walls in a light, calm colour and to put up some impressionism oil paintings from the previous century, or to just use charmed replicas to lower the costs. The vampire had made a last, offhanded comment that if they made the modifications, several of his brothers and sisters would likely drop by.....

Harry scrunched his face in thought at that remark and asked, "How would they know what the place looks like if they haven't ever been here?"

Jasper turned back to him away from his inspection of the place and confessed. "It seems that you are a bit more perceptive than I originally thought. You see, there hasn't been a vampire in this establishment yet because they didn't trust whether the place was safe or not for our kind."

"Oh," Harry replied dumbly, not knowing what to say to that.

"Let me explain. My kind has been hunted down incessantly for centuries by English vampire hunters and never has there been such an establishment before. Naturally, we were all skeptical of the intentions of such a place, so I came by to inspect the place," Jasper clarified.

"What makes you so convinced in thinking that you would be safe in this establishment if it was indeed just a rue to slay your kind?" Harry asked confusedly, with only curiosity and no skepticism.

Moreau chuckled a little and Harry noticed that he was holding back his full-blown laughter. "Let's just say that I'm a bit older and more powerful than the average vampire." He said mysteriously.

Harry didn't want to aggravate the vampire who could provide a whole faction of customers, so he kept his questions about that statement to himself.

Jasper noticed the wizard child holding back his questions and smiled while replying. "Don't worry Harry Potter, I have already made my verdict. I must compliment you and your uncle on such a fine establishment and will recommend it to my brothers and sisters. Despite some of the uncertainties about the place, many were still eager to come and check it out."

With that, the vampire left the bar and Harry hadn't seen a vampire since. He didn't doubt that Jasper Moreau would spread the word that the Blood Moon Inn was a safe haven for vampires but had no idea how long it would take before the vampires would come visit the inn.

All too soon it was Sunday, the 5th of January and Remus and Harry were standing on the side of platform 9¾, waiting for Harry's friends to show up. He had already said hi to Wayne, who already went aboard the train with his fellow Hufflepuffs and had promised to come by Harry's compartment to introduce himself to his friends. Finally, at ten minutes to eleven, Blaise came through the portal with Daphne, Lord and Lady Greengrass and a woman that could only be her mother, seeing as she looked just like an older version of her daughter.

Blaise smiled widely as she saw Harry waiting for her and Harry grinned back. He gave Blaise a quick hug when they approached and then turned towards her gorgeous mother.

"You didn't tell me you had an older sister Blaise. I am Lord Harry James Potter, ma'am, it's a pleasure to finally meet you." Harry bowed his head and lightly kissed the back of the woman's hand when she offered it in return.

The black-haired woman let out a musical laugh and curtsied in return. "My lord. I've heard a lot about you these past two weeks, and not the least of it from Blaise; it's good to finally be able to match the stories to a face."

She looked him over and Harry had to force himself not to shift under her gaze. "You were right Danielle, he certainly is a charmer. I can see why our daughters are so taken by him." Mrs. Zabini mentioned towards her friend, Daphne's mother.

That statement was immediately followed by the spluttering of 'said' daughters and Harry blushed lightly. He quickly introduced Remus to Mrs. Zabini, said his goodbyes and followed the girls on the train.

The time frame should pick up after first year I think...

The second semester

Headmaster's Office

It was Sunday, the 5th of January and a troubled Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore was pondering at his desk in his office at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In front of him were several editions of the Daily Prophet from the past few days containing various articles about a recently opened inn in Knockturn Alley, called the 'Blood Moon Inn'. The new inn that normally wouldn't be on the Headmaster's mind for very long was a special case that slightly troubled him.

It seemed that the establishment focused on welcoming patrons of all magical origins and thus provided a safe haven for the various magical creatures. The inn could serve as a balancing point between the wizarding population and other magical races which is something that interfered with Dumbledore's plans for the future. While the objective was admirable of course, it thwarted his intentions for Neville Longbottom to eventually unite the whole magical world.

The Boy-Who-Lived was destined by prophecy to defeat the Dark Lord once again when he came back, for Voldemort's eventual return was inevitable. Afterwards, Neville would be hailed as the savior once more and would most likely become the next leader of the Wizarding World. HE should be the one to unite the magical world, NOT Harry Potter.

Harry Potter was another thing that was on the Headmaster's mind. The boy was obviously powerful and talented, since practically all of his professors couldn't stop praising him during the past two staff meetings. On top of that, he now also held one of the Deathly Hallows, something Dumbledore himself had searched for throughout the better part of his life. Those blasted goblins had counteracted him from giving it to Neville in loan, where he could keep a close eye on the item. But now Harry Potter had caught an entirely different interest from the Headmaster, one that required careful consideration.

According to rumors, the boy was popular by his peers and didn't really care for house affiliations. He had enormous talent and a passion for learning all about magic, not unlike another student

Dumbledore had once taught. The Headmaster shuddered at that thought of comparing Harry Potter to Tom Riddle and quickly went back to his musings for the future. He reckoned that he would just advise Neville Longbottom to become good friends with the Potter boy, so that the Boy-Who-Lived's fame would overshadow any popularity that Harry Potter could gain.

Harry's return to Hogwarts was a welcome one for him since he had been neglecting his studies mainly because of the inn. He hadn't intended to achieve something apart from some reading during the break but two weeks without progress just didn't sit right with him. He hadn't expected to be able to perform magic throughout the holidays so he had planned accordingly.

The train arrived just before dinner and Kevin got to see his first Thestral that was pulling the carriage, because of his visit to the hospital during the holidays. Students traded their Christmas stories over the course of their meal and before long, Harry entered his dorm sleepily.

However before he could enter the land of dreams, he was pleasantly surprised by a wrapped-up present lying on his bed. He picked it up carefully and felt the contents, guessing what it was immediately. He took the package into the bathroom for some privacy since he didn't want the knowledge of his invisibility cloak getting out and opened it eagerly.

A beautiful fluid, silvery gray cloak that Harry confirmed was his father's invisibility cloak for the parcel came with a note on top of it. It had a single phrase written on it in a narrow, loopy handwriting.

Use it well.

Was all that the note said and Harry rolled his eyes at Dumbledore's antics. He was pleasantly surprised though that he had acquired the heirloom from the headmaster with basically no trouble whatsoever. It seemed that the silent threat of goblin awareness of the cloak did what it was supposed to do according to Remus and nipped any kind of previously planned deception in the bud.

Harry was startled to feel tears coming from his eyes as he let the soft cloak slide through his fingers. 'This was my father's...' he thought reverently and remembered all the stories Remus had told

him of his father's adventures at Hogwarts with this priceless heirloom. Harry slipped the cloak around himself for a moment in admiration before returning to his bed and falling asleep with a smile.

Weeks of constant studying flowed into months and Harry diligently kept up his work on Transfiguration. He used the advanced book on animation, 'The Underestimated Art of Animation', from his own collection next to the 'Guide to Advanced Transfiguration' which simplified the advanced transfiguration examples. He had started doing this before while studying Inanimate-to-Animate Transfiguration with a similar book on Animation charms from the library which was a kind of a beginners guide for that branch of Charms. But by now he was working on advanced animations.

Practically every minute of the spare time that he had was spent in an empty classroom, keeping control of animated, walking chairs and tables and practicing his Cross-Species Transfiguration. By February Harry was already transfiguring desks into pigs and pigs into lions with ease and he deemed himself ready to start with Human Transfiguration.

That brought the minor problem with it since he didn't know anyone that he could practice on. Blaise might agree but Harry didn't want to hurt her and knew that even he was prone to making mistakes in the beginning with such a complex branch of magic. No one else besides Kevin, who would never agree to it, was aware of his proficiency in Transfiguration and both of them didn't even know the end-goal.

He was pondering his options while walking towards the kitchens in the dungeons for a late snack. He could try to skip ahead to Self-Transfiguration but that would undoubtedly land him in the infirmary and would result in questions being asked about who the perpetrator was. He could just try and transfigure a human body out of a dummy but that was an extremely advanced application of Human Transfiguration and wouldn't be the same as actually transfiguring a human being. By now he had reached the portrait of the fruit bowl, absently tickled the pear and was immediately surrounded by eager little house-elves as he entered the kitchens.

"What is you needing, young master Potter?" An older elf that he recognized from previous visits to the kitchens asked of him.

"I just came by to pick up a snack please," he said politely.

At least half a dozen elves came up to him carrying plates filled with sandwiches, cakes of all sorts and other snacks. Harry chuckled and picked up two sandwiches, thanking all the elves politely for their excellent service. The elves blushed at the unexpected praise and quickly returned to their previous activities, with only the older elf from before staying behind.

"Can I be doing anything else for you, young master?"

Harry had a sudden inspiration that the elves knew the castle better than anyone since they kept everything clean. He decided to go with his hunch and asked the elf for help.

"Yes, I think you can. I'm currently working ahead of my class schedule but I require materials to practice on, like life-sized dummies and all kinds of objects to transfigure. Do you where I can find such things?" Harry asked hopefully, wondering if there was a storeroom somewhere in the castle that he could use to practice some more.

"Mellon knows of where to find those things. They is being in the 'Room of Hidden Things' or the 'Come and Go room' as you wizard folk calls it." The little elf, Mellon apparently his name was, told him proudly.

"Where is this room?" Harry asked eagerly.

"It is being located on the seventh floor; across the tapestry of a barmy wizard who's trying to teach trolls how to dance." The elf explained.

Harry had spent much of his free time exploring the castle in the beginning of the year to find a suitable place for practicing Transfiguration. He knew of the place where the elf meant that the room should be but couldn't remember a door anywhere near that location.

"I didn't know there was such a room there, is the door hidden or invisible?" He asked confusedly.

"Yes and no, the room is hidden, young master. That is, you need to walk past the wall opposite of the tapestry three times while thinking of the Room of Hidden Things and then the door will appear." Mellon explained in detail.

Harry thought that the place was remarkably close to the Headmaster's office and the Gryffindor common room and voiced his concern of being found out. "Who else knows of this?"

"We has seen Headmaster Dumblydoor there once when he required a lavatory and Mellon personally has seen Mr. Filch finding extra cleaning supplies in there when he has run short...." Mellon trailed off.

"I see," Harry said, lost in thought.

It wouldn't do to get caught by someone who had prior knowledge of the room, but it sounded like the room had enormous potential and that the Headmaster and the caretaker had just come across it by accident. He reckoned that he could just check it out and decide later whether he would make use of it or not. He thanked the elf and returned to his dorm, already planning to examine the room that night with the help of his father's cloak.

And so Harry came to discover the magnificent Room of Requirement.

That night, he followed the house-elf Mellon's instructions to the letter and concentrated hard on the Room of Hidden Things while walking past the blank wall three times. Harry had already expected a door to appear so that was no surprise. However the moment he entered the room, his jaw fell open from bewilderment.

The room was huge! Rows and rows filled with items such as trunks packed with school stuff, some of which seemed century's old, cabinets full of knickknacks, chairs, desks and stacks of books, notes and other scrolls. And that was just his first observation of the room, or so Harry realized as he thought of what else could be hidden in those trunks, between the ordinary things. He could probably spend all of the seven Hogwarts years searching through this room and still not finish by the time he graduated!

Harry spent the entire night exploring the limitations of the room, going in and out while thinking of different things. A training room resulted in a fully furnished dueling ring with weapons lining the walls and even several dummies to the side. A library resulted in a copy of the Hogwarts library, with a smaller amount of books on every subject but several more obscure ones that have probably been outlawed since the time of the founders of Hogwarts. A cozy living room with a long leather couch and two squashy armchairs in front of a fireplace with a king-sized bed in the background put a blush on Harry's cheeks but he quickly dismissed that thought.

The Come and Go Room contained an immense amount of information and wealth and if he wanted to use that for himself then the entire room should remain a secret. He reckoned that he would have to use extreme stealth every time he entered the room to prevent Headmaster Dumbledore or one of the idiot Gryffindors from discovering it. He speculated about who might have created such a room and to what purpose while sitting on the couch in front of the fire.

As if hearing his thoughts, a thin book appeared on the table in front of him and he read the title on the spine after he got out of his stupor at seeing a book appear out of nowhere.

The Room of Requirement – by Rowena Ravenclaw

Harry could have cried out of happiness when he read that the author of the book was the founder of his Hogwarts house. He quickly started to read the book and discovered it was a manual of some kind for the use of the room that apparently was created by Rowena Ravenclaw. It mentioned the limitations, possibilities and designed purpose of the room in the introduction but Harry was disappointed to read that things produced in the room couldn't be taken outside.

The next day dragged by at an extremely slow pace since Harry was eager to return to the Room of Requirement. He still had to return to his secluded classroom where he previously practiced, to clean out his things from that room.

Ever since he started practicing Transfiguration each day to advance enough for the Animagus transformation, he stopped cleaning up after himself every time he used that one room.

However, as he walked through the hallway towards the remote classroom in the abandoned part of the castle, he heard a familiar voice groaning from what sounded like exertion and decided to check it out. He opened the door that had a rather simple Locking Charm on it with a quick 'Alohomora' and entered the room. What he saw inside made his jaw drop of astonishment.

Nymphadora Tonks was doing what seemed like exercises for dueling practice. She had attempted to transfigure about half a dozen chairs into life-sized dummies and animated them in addition to move sporadically. She was trying to get past the dummies, moving around and dodging imaginary spell-fire, rolling on the floor to avoid being hit while returning fire with Stunning Spells, Blasting Hexes, Disarming Charms and Impediment Jinxes.

Tonks was wearing tight pants and a top and Harry could see that she was sweating profusely. After a minute of watching her move around or so, the charms and partial transfigurations wore off and the chairs clattered on the ground. Tonks seemed to slump down to the ground and leaned back on her elbows while panting heavily from physical exertion. Harry reckoned he had done enough perving on the seventh year Hufflepuff and decided to make his presence known.

"Looking good there, Nymphadora."

Tonks turned around faster than Harry could blink and he had to put up a quick 'Protego' shield to block the stunner she fired off. Harry didn't know whether she reacted that way because of his unobserved perving or the use of her first name. He just smiled sheepishly in response to her astonished look for his quick use of the fifth year Shield Charm.

"Don't call me that, Potter." Tonks snapped as she shook herself from the surprise.

"Potter, is it now? I thought we were friends, Tonks....." Harry used his hurt tone and look but wasn't really affected by it. He hadn't really talked to Tonks since that time at the Owlery and so he didn't actually care much for the girl.

Tonks took a deep breath before apologizing. "We are, I'm sorry. It's just that I'm really stressed out right now. What are you doing here anyway?"

"I was just walking in the hallway outside when I heard a commotion coming from this classroom. I negated the simple locking charm and peeked inside where I spotted you battling a small army of the infamous and fearsome chairs of Hogwarts. What did they ever do to you? And what was it exactly that you were doing?" Harry joked and asked for the reasoning of such an exercise.

Tonks chuckled appreciatively at the quip of her poor transfigurations and answered Harry since it wasn't really a secret anyway. "I'm training myself to become accepted at the Auror Academy. It's what I want to do after my graduation this year at Hogwarts."

"I see," Harry replied thoughtfully. "Then shouldn't you have like practice duels instead of playing around with poorly transfigured dummies?"

"That too, but exercises such as these improve my reaction time and I haven't got anybody to duel with anyway. Nobody in my dorm has any desire to practice with me so even if they did agree to a duel, I'd wipe the floor with them in seconds." Tonks explained passionately before muttering, "Not that they would ever agree to such a thing, since all they talk about is make-up and boyfriends."

"How about I help you? I have never dueled before so I could use the practice...." Harry offered, trying to come up with a mutually beneficial arrangement.

"No offense Harry, but you're a just a first-year. You might have learned some defense spells and charms on your own but that doesn't exactly make you a skilled opponent. I could probably wipe the floor with you quicker than with the other girls in my dorm."

"I realize that, which is why you'll have to teach me. I'm sure I'll be able to catch up quickly enough and in return, I'll help you with these exercises that you've recently been doing." Harry explained to the seventh year in the same belittling tone that she used on him just moments before.

"What do you mean, 'you'll help me'?" Tonks asked curiously about what the first-year thought he could do that she, by herself couldn't.

Harry pointed his wand at the chairs in response and transfigured three of them into perfect dummies. He continued however, by adding several Animation Charms that would make them move much more humanlike, as if dodging spells that are being fired towards them. Tonks got a maniacal gleam in her eyes as Harry looked in her direction and he decided to continue.

He added a spell combination of Charms and Transfiguration that he had read about the night before in the book about the Room of Requirement by Rowena Ravenclaw. The combination voice-activates a dummy to launch paintballs in three colors towards the target, making it a selective launching method. The colors were green, red and yellow representing the fatal Killing Curse, incapacitating spells and encumbrance spells respectively.

As soon as Harry finished his adjustments to the training equipment, the gear jumped into action all of a sudden and fired off the first paintball towards Tonks, the intended target. The small ball hit the Hufflepuff straight on, splattering green paint over her female assets.

"Hey!" Tonks shouted as she looked down her chest.

"Sorry," Harry said quickly, blushing slightly. "Pause!" And the dummies stopped moving.

"The dummies will fire those paintballs towards you continuously in three different colors, green, red and yellow. They represent lethal, incapacitating and encumbering spells respectively, making you want to prioritize about which balls/spells to avoid in combat. It is voice-activated, recognizing the commands; 'start', 'pause', 'continue' and 'end session'."

Tonks was already eagerly moving forward to try out her new training gear but Harry decided to intervene before he lost his advantage. "So, are you going to train me in dueling or shall I just cancel the charms and transfigurations on these chairs?"

It was fairly amusing to see Tonks' head snap towards him with an audible crack and a look of desperation on her face. The gear was obviously superior to her own transfigurations and with it she would

stand a much better chance at the Auror Academy entrance exam. Harry was tempted by the expression to just let her use the dummies for nothing but stayed his ground, knowing he would never be able to learn as fast without Tonks' help.

Finally after a minute of staring each other down, Tonks sighed and gave in. She reckoned it probably wouldn't take too much time for her to teach the boy a few spells, since she was aware of his reputation for being the smartest first-year student. Plus, she also saw him effortlessly put up a 'Protego' Shield Charm just a few minutes before.

"Fine. But you're going to help me with my Auror training as much as possible. By the time I graduate, I want to be ready for anything they'll throw at me....."

"Sure, whatever you say Tonks. I'll even pitch in during the exercise routines to keep you on your toes. Continue!" Harry said the last word loudly and with that, the dummies sprung into action once more.

Tonks quickly started dodge the paintballs and Harry decided to up the level after a few minutes since she seemed to get the hang of it.

"Hey Tonks, you know how I mentioned that I would pitch in and help you with this?"

"Y-Yes....." Tonks said out of breath while she continued to move around.

"Well, here goes. 'Rictusempra!'" Harry shouted out loud to give her enough warning and fired off the Tickling Charm aimed at her back.

Tonks moved to the right quickly and barely managed to evade the charm but didn't complain. For her, this was the best exercise she ever had so far and she still wasn't even finished. She was slightly covered in yellow paint, hit by one or two red paintballs but had succeeded in avoiding the green ones. Harry proceeded to fire off Tickling Charms with increasing speed while circling around and when he finally hit Tonks in the side, he called out "End Session!"

Tonks was panting on the ground and Harry found it amusing to see a smile on the girls face while her hair had turned red from physical

exertion. He had heard from the Hogwarts rumor mill that Nymphadora Tonks was a Metamorphmagus and read up on the ability afterwards but it was remarkable to actually witness it in action.

"Nice hair color, Nymphadora." Harry said good-humoredly so he was quite dumbfounded to see the girl freeze in alarm.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked quietly.

Tonks got up and looked Harry soberly in the eye. Harry was taken aback by what had managed to deflate the normally exuberant girl and turned her so serious all of a sudden. He was naturally curious about the ability and the Metamorphmagus saw that interest shining in his eyes.

"Go ahead, just ask me...." Tonks said with a sigh.

"Ask you what?" Harry responded softly. "I already knew about your ability Tonks. Hogwarts rumor mill had a lot to say about She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named-By-Her-First-Name and you didn't actually keep it a secret, or at least so I've heard. You didn't bring it up so I figured you just didn't want to talk about it."

"So, who do you want me to turn into?" Tonks asked with another sigh.

"Why would I want you to do that?" Harry said confused....

"Are you saying you don't want me to turn into your fantasy-girl? Or to make my breasts bigger?" The Metamorph questioned disbelievingly.

"Not really, you look fine to me." Harry said, blushing slightly.

"Really? So you don't want anything that has to do with my ability?" She clarified with a delighted smile.

"Well.... I have some questions of course, but I can keep them to myself...." He trailed off in return.

"That's okay; I'll answer your questions. It's just that every time people find out about what I am and what I can do they want me to

change into someone for them. It's frustrating to never really be accepted as myself, you know?" Harry nodded supportively since he had a request that would be invaluable to him if she agreed.

"I've read that your ability is something that you have from childhood, so there's no way to develop such a gift?"

Tonks shook her head with a smile, she'd expected that question. Harry continued.....

"Since your morphing abilities have such a resemblance to Transfiguration, wouldn't it make sense that you should be talented in that particular branch of magic?"

Tonks thought it over for a while, before replying. "You're right that it would make sense however it isn't the case as you've seen from my army of fearsome chairs before." Harry nodded, confused that the ability didn't seem to influence her skill in Transfiguration.

"Say someone was to accidentally transfigure your arm into a paw or a wing, would you be able to return the arm back to normal?"

"Accidentally?" Tonks inquired with a smile. Harry just nodded, suspecting she probably already had him figured out.

Tonks scrunched her face in concentration and slowly morphed her left hand into a bear paw before turning it back in a normal looking hand. She smiled and asked in a mischievous tone. "Anything else you want to ask me, Harry?"

"Could I... Would it be possible to..... Can I please practice my Human Transfiguration on you? Please, please, please, I don't know what else to do and I don't want anybody else to know exactly how far I am in the subject." Harry begged the seventh year Hufflepuff and put on his puppy-dog eyes to persuade her.

Tonks however just laughed at the expression on the first-year's face before her and thought things through. The request was easily granted since she would be able to simply morph back in case anything went wrong. She had seen that Harry was obviously very talented in Transfiguration when he made the dummies out of chairs as if it was nothing while he was only a first-year.

"What would you give me in return?"

Harry thought about it and considered what he could teach the girl. Suddenly, he came up with an idea that had been bothering him for quite some time. "Aurors are required to know Occlumency, right?"

Tonks nodded slowly, having read the requirements for Auror graduation.

"I could teach you that. I'll have to study Legilimency to test your shields regularly, but I was planning on doing that anyway. This way, you'll get to seriously strengthen your shields obviously and I get to develop my proficiency in Legilimency on you." Harry explained.

He had been wondering what Neville Longbottom and Ronald Weasley knew of the protections guarding the Philosopher's Stone and couldn't come up with a viable way to find out. Legilimency was the only untraceable way he could think of but he hadn't ever studied the subject. It was an even more difficult mind art to learn compared to Occlumency, since you needed to have mastered its counterpart and continuous practice with the offensive art.

Harry had flipped through the book 'The Mind Arts: Legilimency' during Christmas and already knew that the subject was impossible to learn without constant practice. This arrangement would provide the opportunity to do exactly that and get another benefit from it additionally. Now all he needed was for Tonks to agree to it.

"I don't know, I've checked the library but I haven't been able to find anything on the subject. Because of the Sorting Hat, the entire school is aware that you know Occlumency but are you sure that you can teach me?" Tonks asked doubtfully but interested in learning the art at the same time.

"Of course. I have a book in my possession about the subject that you can borrow but it recommends learning under the supervision of a Legilimens. Also, both Professor Snape and Headmaster Dumbledore are accomplished Legilimens that regularly check the students and would be able to ascertain my proficiency in Transfiguration if you didn't at least learn to detect a mental assault." Harry explained monotonously, knowing the comment about Snape and Dumbledore would cause an outburst from the future Auror.

Eventually, when Tonks had finally finished her rant about the illegal activity from the Headmaster and Potions professor, she agreed to let Harry practice his Human Transfiguration on her. Harry reckoned he had to set up a schedule of transfigurations that he should practice on the Metamorphmagus before he could move on to Self-Transfiguration. He would try out partial transfigurations first, for example turning her arm into a paw or giving her a pig's tail, before starting complete transfigurations like turning Tonks into a monkey.

After Harry had managed to turn Tonks' eyebrow yellow they left, going separate ways with Tonks walking towards the Hufflepuff common room and Harry going to his former practice room to clean up. They promised to meet in the secluded classroom three nights a week to continue with the lessons. Harry would arrange for her to borrow the book on Occlumency as soon as possible while Tonks would draw up a list of spells that he would have to know to learn how to duel properly. They had discussed the curriculum of Tonks' instruction in dueling and Harry determined he would learn the spells himself, saying he could spend his time better while with her.

Mid-February announced the beginning of Harry's entirely too full schedule. Kevin and Blaise seemed to comprehend the situation when noticing Harry's rushed attitude everyday and didn't take offense from the fact that their friend hadn't spent much time with them. On top of his normal if boring classes, his extra lessons with Tonks and his self-studies in dueling spells and Legilimency until deep in the night; Harry had also once again become involved in a prank war with the Weasley twins.

They had started with sending him a letter one morning in the Great Hall during breakfast. It was delivered by an unfamiliar owl but Harry didn't find this suspicious as he received packages from stores by owl-order all the time. However, when he picked up the envelope his ankh pendant suddenly started to warm up. It took him a moment to understand the significance of the phenomenon and with a confirming glimpse to the twins, acted as quickly as possible.

He dropped the letter on the ground and drew his wand, unconcerned by the curious glances he received for the action. He performed 'Tergeo' on both hands, switching wand arms for the act which rose more than a few curious eyebrows, before burning the letter with 'Incendio', something that caused even more surprise by

the spectators. 'Incendio' was a fire conjuration charm and wasn't taught before third year, so for a first-year to casually perform the spell was quite a feat.

"Mr. Potter, what are you doing?" Harry recognized the Transfiguration professor's voice behind him.

"I had to remove a substance from my hands that came from the letter, Professor McGonagall. Why, is there a problem?"

"What kind of substance?" She asked curtly.

"I do not know. May I ask why you are interested in my mail, Professor?" Harry replied.

"Magic is not to be used in" The posing witch started but Harry decided to cut her off, knowing what she was going to say.

"....the corridors, I know. Luckily for me, we are currently in the Great Hall and not the corridors. However thank you, for once again informing me of that rule, ma'am."

McGonagall seemed to be annoyed at being interrupted but probably realized that she had no real reason to be there, for she nodded once before turning around and walking back towards the staff table. Harry turned towards the frustrated looking culprits at the Gryffindor table and visibly made the gesture of a single finger shaking from side to side once again while shaking his head disapprovingly.

He was almost positive that he was still being watched by Professor McGonagall and that she would be able to connect the dots between the incident and the Weasley twins' reputation. It would put the heat on the Weasley twins during the coming prank war even though Harry was the established target of this attempted prank.

Weeks passed and the war between Harry and the Weasleys once again occupied the Hogwarts rumor mill. Nobody knew for certain of course that Harry was the other partaker but there were suspicions amongst the student and staff population. So far, he had successfully evaded every single prank since they lost the element of surprise and had once again managed to turn a few pranks onto them instead.

Kevin was not a target of the Weasley twins this time but that didn't mean Harry had to exclude him. He became a vital part of the scheming and planning for the retaliation while Harry pulled it off flawlessly. However, it seemed that his opponents didn't know when to give up since every time Harry succeeded, they would try something more offensive in return.

At the beginning of March, when he was finally able to start on Self-Transfiguration, Harry decided to put an end to the prank war with a big finale. It would reveal him without a doubt as the opposing side of the prank war but he had covered his tracks sufficiently enough so that he could only be punished for this one, single prank.

That Saturday morning, March 7th, Harry got up early and stood watch outside the Gryffindor common room, hidden under his father's invisibility cloak. He waited for the Weasley twins to come out so he could ambush them, but many students exited from behind the Fat Lady's portrait however the Weasleys were nowhere to be seen. Harry found it quite suspicious that they would decide to sleep in on the one day that he was waiting outside to trap them.

And then suddenly, it hit him.

He couldn't believe how stupid he was not to have realized it before. Remus had even written him about this possibility and Harry had just dismissed it without a thought. It was so obvious now that he could curse himself into oblivion. Fred and George Weasley were in possession of the Marauder's Map...

Remus had suggested that if the map was still at Hogwarts where the Marauders had left it then it was probably in Filch's office. Harry had searched the squib's office one night after having the elves spike his dinner with Sleeping Draught and found nothing useful except for records of the Marauders and their exploits. His werewolf uncle said that might be the case, because Harry couldn't have been the only one to ever search through the caretaker's cabinets. Remus reasoned that the map would then most logically be in the possession of Hogwarts' resident rule breakers, but Harry had found the idea too farfetched and dismissed it.

So now he had a conundrum on his hands, since his prank required him to ambush the Weasley twins. However, he wasn't raised by a

Marauder for nothing so he quickly adjusted his plans before going to the Great Hall and getting some food.

During breakfast, he knew he was being watched by two suspicious Weasleys so Harry kept a maniacal grin on his face. From former experiences with Remus, he discovered that an innocent look didn't fool someone like the twins but a maniacal grin of anticipation would make them all the more nervous. He found it very amusing to see them flinch a bit at the Gryffindor table when he made eye contact with the two.

When they left, seemingly relieved that nothing had happened, Harry followed them, whipped out his invisibility cloak from his bag and quickly wrapped it around himself. When his targets passed through a deserted hallway, he was barely heard as he stunned them both from behind and levitated them one after another into an empty classroom nearby. He hurriedly searched their pockets and sure enough, found a ragged, old bit of parchment between some Dungbombs and strange looking cakes. Harry shook his head disappointedly, slightly disgusted by their treatment of such an invaluable item.

Harry put his wand on the parchment and spoke in an emotional tone,

"I solemnly swear that I am up to no good".

He had to smile when the map activated. It was another thing of his father's, but it was so much more. It contained a piece of his personality, something he, James Potter, spent hours working on. Harry hadn't expected the item could mean this much to him when his uncle told him about it. Words appeared on the parchment;

Messrs. Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs.

Purveyors of Aids to Magical Mischief-Makers are proud to present:

The Marauder's Map

Harry quietly blinked back his tears and looked to see if breakfast had finished already...

Sure enough, the map showed Minerva McGonagall walking away from an empty Great Hall, meaning that she had closed the doors behind her and they shouldn't open again until lunch. The eleven year old prankster checked the hallway towards the Great Hall on the ground floor and acted quickly once he noticed that the coast was clear. Harry Potter had something to prove.....

I know already that I'm really awful at the Elvin English.

Trail to the Philosopher's Stone

Fred and George Weasley woke up dazedly, wondering what had happened and landed them in their current position. Focusing their eyes, they noticed each other on both sides of the entrance to the Great Hall and saw Harry Potter standing in between them. The twins realized they were both hanging about a foot high on the walls by their backs and Potter had obviously pranked them.

"Hey guys, how's it hanging?"

Fred and George tried to reply by shouting the firstie's ears off but quickly realized they were under a Silencing Charm or drugged with a Muffling Draught because no sound came out of their mouths.

"Ah, I see you found out about that quandary. But no matter, you're going to be listening for a while anyway and it is best if you don't interrupt me." Harry mused out loud, making the twins curious about what their intended prank target was planning.

He continued when he noticed he had their full attention. "You see, I've become a bit tired of your disappointing attempts at pranking me so I've come up with something to take care of that. This is what is probably going to happen....."

"In a few hours, Professor McGonagall is going to come through those doors," here Harry motioned towards the doors to the Entrance Hall, "preparing to open the hall for lunch when she'll discover you hanging here. She'll first try to get you down herself," now Harry paused and added in a fake whisper, "at which she'll fail of course," and Harry continued at normal volume, "before she goes off to get the help of Professor Dumbledore. By this time, the student population will have arrived to see what the commotion is all about and will laugh themselves silly at your current predicament."

"The staff will probably send the students away to have lunch in their common rooms for once, provided by the house-elves of course, while they continue with the challenge of getting you down which they'll suspect won't take very long. At dinner, when you're still hanging here, I'll return from my absence during lunch and will probably be suspected of being the culprit...."

"However due to their lack of proof, they'll have no reason for punishing me for it and I'll walk away free. Halfway during dinner, when the Great Hall is filled with the Hogwarts population, the Muffling Draught you're currently under the influence of will have worn off and you'll be able to speak once more....." Harry trailed off, knowing the tricky part of the prank started at that moment in time.

"All that I want you to do then is announce loudly to the students and staff that you were thoroughly pranked by Harry Potter, an ickle firstie that managed to get the best of the infamous Weasley twins. After that, I'll let you down and of course will proudly take responsibility for my actions." Here both Fred and George paled in realization, knowing they were caught and going to lose their reputations as Hogwarts' resident best pranksters.

Should they not listen to the first-year then they were probably going to be hanging there for a while, since the boy was speaking with such certainty of the success of his prank. However if they did follow the instructions Potter had given them, then they would lose their reputation as 'Best pranksters of Hogwarts after the Marauders' for being defeated by an ickle firstie."

The teachers might be able to come up with something to get them down without having to admit defeat, but Fred and George doubted it because of the parting remark of Harry Potter;

"You know, you shouldn't mess with the son of a Marauder....."

Harry came to dinner that evening with a huge smile on his face. The professors had decided that they couldn't let the entire student population have their dinner in the common rooms. It seemed that they had indeed failed however in getting the twins down, since Harry had already noticed Headmaster Dumbledore and Professors McGonagall and Snape by the entrance from a distance. However when his Potions Professor noticed him passing by and heading for lunch, Harry got blocked and received the full blow of a pissed off Snape.

"Potter, you did this! Get them down this instant or I'll have you expelled!" He shouted despite Dumbledore's admonitions.

"Why whatever do you mean, Professor Snape?" Harry appeared to be looking over his Potions Professor's shoulder, glancing at the

twins hanging on both sides of the entrance with constipated expressions on their faces. "That looks uncomfortable if you ask me, shouldn't someone get them down?" He inquired in an entirely too innocent tone.

"Yes, that would be for the best." Dumbledore intervened with profusely twinkling eyes, seeing his Slytherin staff member about to go on another rant. "I'm sure that whoever pulled this stunt can see how inconvenient this is and how uncomfortable Misters Weasley are." The headmaster spoke in a persuading tone, probably trying to make Harry see reason.

"Seems to me like Fred and George pulled one prank too many..... However you're right about that, Headmaster." Here he motioned towards the Great Hall filled with students. "It appears that the entire student population is present for this inconvenient situation so it's reasonable to assume that the culprit can observe it at this very moment." Harry removed his wand with a flick of his hand and you could practically hear the suspense reaching its peak in the hall behind the professors.

Harry however only cast a quick 'Tempus' and noticed it probably still took a few minutes for the Muffling Draught to wear off. He slid his wand back into its holster and spoke audibly so that he could be overheard by the twins.

"Would you look at the time? Excuse me Professors, Headmaster, but dinner is already halfway over and I skipped lunch today so I'm just going for a bite to eat."

He tried to walk past the adults but it seemed they weren't amused by his antics since McGonagall blocked his path this time. She seemed annoyed that Harry wasn't affected by her stern, disapproving expression that caused regular first-years to cower before her.

"Mr. Potter, I demand that you release them at once or you'll be in detention for the rest of the year," she snapped.

"And what exactly makes you think I'm capable of getting them down, Professor? It seems to me the headmaster himself is even unable to do that. I'm flattered naturally that you think so highly of my skills however please keep in mind that I'm only just a first-year....."

It seemed McGonagall didn't react well to witty remarks from first-years for Harry noticed her right leg twitch as if she wanted to stomp her foot out of frustration. It was obvious to all involved that Harry was guilty, because of the nature and history of the prank. However Harry couldn't back down before he had received a declaration of supremacy from the twins.

The idea for the prank came from Remus, since it was a Marauder classic from the past. The inability of the professors to dispel it came from its ingenuity which was what made the prank such a success. The trick behind it was a thin, disillusioned plate between the wall and the victim, glued to their backs and stuck to the wall with a Sticking Charm. It took Harry a while to master the Disillusionment Charm but the really difficult part for him was to use a plate thin enough to avoid notice from someone who was able to see through them. Someone with aura sight glasses, like Dumbledore probably, would only notice the Sticking Charm to the wall and perform the counter-spell on the twins. However the muggle glue made this ineffective, since the Sticking Charm was on the plate and not on the twins, causing the professors to be at a loss on how to negate the effect.

His father had covertly pulled it on Snape in their sixth year as a retribution for calling his mother a 'Mudblood' and took 24 hours to wear off. The staff back then also couldn't figure it out and the Marauders were never punished despite many having their suspicions, because they had an alibi when the prank supposedly was pulled.

However Harry had a different reason for pulling the prank and was required to get caught to accomplish his objective. Just then, the Muffling Draught seemed to be wearing off since incomprehensible sounds started to come from the Weasleys. The professors quickly lost their interest in him in favor of the opportunity to interrogate the twins for the confirmation of Harry being the culprit behind the current situation.

"Misters Weasley, can you tell me who is responsible for your current state of being?" Dumbledore asked gently but audibly enough for the entire Great Hall to hear, which was currently in a state of extreme quietness and anticipation.

The twins seemed to struggle for the answer, not having decided yet whether to withhold Harry's triumph over them from the headmaster or to cause him as much trouble with the staff as possible. However it seemed they suddenly chose the latter when Harry stealthily started moving past the professors and towards the Ravenclaw table, as if content to let them hang there for another day.

"It was Harry Potter! He did this to us innocent, exemplary students." The twins screamed out, desperate to be let down to the ground.

As a result, the entire Great Hall burst into applause intended for Harry, because someone had finally delivered retribution to the two who had made the student population suffer with their pranks and jokes.

"Detention for a week, Mr. Potter. And get them down this instant or I'll make it a month!" His Transfiguration Professor threatened when she located him at the Ravenclaw table, sitting next to Kevin and just about to start on his dinner.

Harry stood up silently and walked towards the entrance doors, taking out his wand and coming to a standstill between the twins. He looked both twins in the eye with a barely hidden smirk, before turning to the expectant faces in the Great Hall. McGonagall impatiently made the carry on gesture so Harry turned back with an unseen grin on his face.

"Aguamenti!"

He shouted out unnecessary, for the jet of conjured water spoke for itself when it erupted out of his wand and hit Fred Weasley in the front. The entire Great Hall was astounded that a first-year could perform a sixth year charm but Harry paid it no mind, he had learned it beforehand just for this purpose. He turned towards George and repeated the action, before any of the professors could intervene. Harry noticed that Snape was about to punish him extra until Fred, thoroughly soaked and after a while George as well, landed on the ground with a small thud.

The water dissolved the glue on their backs, making them slide down while the disillusioned plank was still stuck to the wall. However it seemed the Marauders had used a different method for dispelling the prank for the professors didn't seem pleased by the

results. The student population erupted in laughter though at the sight of a completely drenched Fred and George Weasley and with that, Harry sat down once more and returned to his meal.

Professor Flitwick cornered him in Charms class the next Monday morning after the incident and informed him that he was to be taking his detentions at night after curfew with Hagrid this entire week. Harry wondered what his detention might entail since it took place at night and Hagrid was the gamekeeper, but couldn't really come up with something that was even remotely likely.

And so Harry was waiting in the Entrance Hall that evening, still curious about the nature of his detention. Hagrid was supposed to collect him here; therefore Harry was quite surprised when the caretaker, Argus Filch, came up to him from the stairwell. He was leading a trio of students that were following behind him and Harry had to suppress a groan when he saw Neville Longbottom among them.

"Potter, what are you doing here?"

"Obviously I'm here for the same thing you are. Though why our Gryffindor golden boy has earned himself a detention is the real issue here I would say."

Harry noticed that other two students he didn't recognize seemed to get dark looks of annoyance on their faces and only became more interested because of the occurrence. Filch ordered them to follow him and led them outside towards Hagrid's hut, while trying to scare them along the way.

"I bet you'll think twice about breaking a school rule again, won't you, eh?" he said, leering at them. "Oh yes...hard work and pain are the best teachers if you ask me...It's just a pity they let the old punishments die out...hang you by your wrists from the ceiling for a few days, I've got the chains still in my office, keep 'em well oiled in case they're ever needed...Right, off we go, and don't think of running off, now, it'll be worse for you if you do." (1)

Harry found it amusing to see the squib working so hard at making them feel anxious. It seemed the two other students, second years from the looks of it or so Harry thought, weren't affected just like Harry since they were probably familiar with the caretaker's antics.

However Neville was appalled by what Filch kept suggesting they should do to students who broke Hogwarts' rules.

"Is that you, Filch? Hurry up, I want to get started." (1)

Harry was surprised to see the relief appear on the Boy-Who-Lived's face at hearing the gamekeeper's voice, he wasn't aware that Neville knew Hagrid. Filch it seemed noticed the look on Neville's face as well, for he quickly informed them of their task for the evening.

"I suppose you think you'll be enjoying yourself with that oaf? Well, think again, boy. It's into the forest you're going and I'm much mistaken if you'll all come back out in one piece." (1)

Neville stopped dead in his tracks when he heard where they were heading for their detention. Even the other two, slightly older students seemed to be frightened of the idea which made Harry feel a bit annoyed by their cowardice.

"T-The f-f-forest?" Neville stammered out.

Hagrid intervened before Filch could rant more about what kind of dangers lay ahead of them in the Forbidden Forest.

"So, are yeh all up fo' a midnight' stroll in the woods? We got sum importan' issue to take care of tonight, boys. All right there Harry, Neville?" The enormous man asked them when he noticed Harry standing off to the side and Neville cowering behind the taller students.

Harry nodded absently while Neville tried to make an excuse to get out of the detention. Hagrid would have none of it however, saying the Professor specifically told him to do the detention with him tonight.

Filch went back to the castle, grumbling about being friendly towards students who should be punished while Hagrid led them away from his hut and towards the Forbidden Forest.

"Right then," said Hagrid, "now, listen carefully, 'cause it's dangerous what we're gonna do tonight, an' I don' want no one takin' risks. Follow me over here a moment." (1)

He led them to the very edge of the forest. Holding his lamp up high, he pointed down a narrow, winding earth track that disappeared into the thick black trees. A light breeze lifted their hair as they looked into the forest. (1)

"Look there," said Hagrid, "see that stuff shinin' on the ground? Silvery stuff? That's unicorn blood. There's a unicorn in there bin hurt badly by summat. This is the second time in a week. I found one dead last Wednesday. We're gonna try an' find the poor thing. We might have ter put it out of its misery." (1)

Harry was disgusted by the idea of a unicorn getting hurt and having to put it out of its misery. The light creatures were considered sacred in the magical world, and he couldn't think of another creature that would ever hurt such a thing. Hagrid split them up into two groups, so that they could cover more ground and follow the different trails. He warned them to send sparks in the air if they found anything and Harry went with Neville while the half-giant took the two second years that looked ready to piss themselves in their robes.

Harry took the lead, following the trail on the left deeper into the black and silent forest while Hagrid led the two second-years along the trail going right. Neville was walking no more than two feet behind him and Harry noticed that he was shaking slightly from fear.

"So, are you going to explain why you got a detention?" He quietly asked the boy to get his mind off of things.

"Why should I tell you?" Neville snapped in return.

"You don't have to, of course. Though I find it amusing that you spent the last three months trying to talk to me and now that we're here, alone and undisturbed, you're as silent as a grave." Harry said and it was true. Ever since he had returned from Christmas break, Neville had once again been trying to make Harry his friend, not that it had any result.

Neville was silent for a minute while they continued to follow the trail of silver blood on the ground. Harry looked behind him with a raised eyebrow and noticed the boy was deep in thought. When Neville noticed he was being watched, he spoke up.

"I asked those two Hufflepuffs from earlier for their help yesterday with my Potions essay that is due on Friday. They refused saying that if I could survive the Killing Curse, then a Potions essay shouldn't be a problem. I....."He started to explain, but Harry interrupted.

"Quiet!"

Harry had stopped moving, causing Neville who was reminiscing of what had happened to walk into him. Neville stumbled back but Harry was too focused on something ahead to notice the boy behind him.

He was sure that he heard something moving about 50 feet ahead of him. When he walked slightly sideways and slowly towards the origin of the sound he noticed a white horse-like creature, lying on its side partly hidden behind a tree but still neighing softly.

"It's the unicorn." Neville shouted from the rear side of him which made Harry want to curse him into oblivion.

The Boy-Who-Lived walked straight towards the mythical creature, drawn in by its beauty but not seeing the hooded figure rising from behind the unicorn. The individual looked towards Neville causing the boy fell down, clutching his forehead in what looked like a lot of pain.

When the hooded figure started gliding across the ground like some stalking beast towards the Boy-Who-Lived, Harry noticed a trail of silvery liquid down the front of its robes. He couldn't imagine something being stupid enough to consume the sacred blood of a unicorn. From the moment it touched your lips, you would lead a half-life, a cursed life.

He stopped that train of thought when the being nearly reached Neville Longbottom. He may not like the boy, but that didn't mean he could just let him die. Harry flicked his wrist, drawing his wand and quickly came up with a strategy to drive off the attacker. It seemed that he went unnoticed by the individual, giving him the element of surprise.

"Abscondo", he started softly with a tap on his head. Harry fortunately felt a blanket of magic wash over him, signalling the success of his Disillusionment Charm.

"Flipendo!" Harry muttered softly, but focussing a lot of power into the spell.

The orange beam from the Knockback Jinx hit the target in the side, causing the figure to be thrown away at least 30 feet and right into another tree. Harry was sure that he heard a human grunt coming from the individual, indicating that it was a person who had assaulted the unicorn and tried to attack Neville.

The figure recovered quickly though, which wasn't surprising since Harry knew unicorn blood had amazing healing powers, regardless of the consequences. The attacker raised a wand and fired off a nonverbal sickly-looking yellow curse in his direction.

The spell was startlingly accurate, but Harry didn't want to take the chance to see if his Shield Charm would block it so he dove behind a tree next to him. He realized that he didn't really stand a chance against his opponent because he was still far too inexperienced in duelling. Harry couldn't even defeat Tonks, a seventh year student, during their weekly practice duels. He recalled Hagrid searching somewhere else in the forest and quickly launched red sparks into the air.

Meanwhile, the hooded figure had silently approached Harry's location and launched another curse towards the origin of the sparks.

Harry could have cursed himself for his stupidity. He barely evaded the attack and returned fire with a nonverbal (though he didn't realize it) 'Stupefy'. Afterwards, he silenced his feet with a murmured 'Silencio', before moving off. Fortunately for him, Neville had bolted the moment Harry's jinx hit its target, and was therefore out of harm's way for the time being and unable to witness Harry's aptitude in magic.

Suddenly, Harry heard the sound of galloping coming from the direction of where Harry and Neville had entered this place earlier. He looked towards the origin of the sound and saw his first Centaur ever; for with its half horse, half man body it couldn't possibly be anything else. The hooded figure seemed to have vanished,

probably because the centaur chased it off but Harry was still on the alert for any unknown danger around.

He ignored the centaur for the time being in favour of trying to help the unicorn, which was only barely alive at this point because it was still bleeding out. Harry gently approached the light creature, having negated his Disillusionment Charm already after the centaur drove off its attacker.

The unicorn whinnied faintly, probably afraid of wizards even before the event and all the more now, however it couldn't move anyway because of its injuries. Harry kneeled next to it and reassuringly patted its mane while removing a Blood-Replenishing Potion from his potions belt that he always carried with him. He had no idea if the potion worked on unicorns but if he didn't do something then it was guaranteed to die.

The unicorn seemed reluctant to take the potion but Harry just poured the liquid into its mouth, stroking its throat to stimulate the swallowing reflex. He repeated the process with a general Healing Potion and checked the wound where the precious silvery blood was leaking from. It looked as if it was caused by a cutting curse but the potion didn't have any effect on it.

"Episkey", Harry tried while tracing the wound with his wand but it didn't seem to work.

The healing spell was intended for smaller injuries like broken noses and split lips but not a massive wound such as this. Unfortunately, it was the only one Harry knew of since he still hadn't read up on the subject of Healing. He started sobbing to himself, feeling guilty that his failure and lack of knowledge caused this beautiful creature to die.

"She is meant to depart this life, Harry Potter. It is written in the stars." The centaur spoke up from behind him in a deep, remorseful voice.

"NO! She can't die, I won't let it." He shouted back. "Episkey", he tried again to no avail with tears in his eyes.

The unicorn was looking directly into his eyes and Harry couldn't help but to feel serene. It seemed that the female had already resigned herself to her fate.

Harry on the other hand had different plans when an idea suddenly came to him. He quickly grabbed one of the discarded, now empty vials and held it to the wound that was still seeping out blood. When the vial was completely filled, Harry moved it to the protesting unicorn's mouth.

"I know it's disgusting, but please take it. I'll take the cursed life if that's what it takes." He said with tears now streaming down his face when the horse-like creature refused to drink it. "I don't want you to die....." He finished off in a whisper.

He locked eyes with the unicorn once more and got the feeling of acceptance. At first Harry didn't know whether it was the acceptance of death or the taking of its own blood, however when he felt a small nudge against his hand he acted quickly. He fed the blood the same way as he did with the potions and emptied the vial into her mouth, despite of the centaur's objections.

The wound seemed to close slowly on itself until there was nothing left besides discoloured skin/hide and some of its pelt bare, much to Harry's joy. He hugged the creature by throwing his arms around its neck before he seemed to come to the realization of what exactly he was doing.

"Thank you," he whispered quietly.

Harry stood up and apologetically moved back a bit while the unicorn was recovering on the ground before him. He turned towards the centaur who was gaping like a fish because of the evening's turn of events.

"I have yet to thank you for rescuing both of us from that evil creature earlier. So thank you, centaur. May I ask your name?" Harry asked politely.

"You are welcome, Harry Potter. And my name is Firenze. Hagrid informed us that he would be taking some students into the forest tonight and that you were among them. So when I encountered the young Longbottom boy on his own whilst running back towards the

castle, I knew that something was wrong." The centaur replied, still looking at the unicorn that was quickly getting better.

"Who would do such a thing? To hurt something so pure, so extraordinarily good, it just seems too unreal to me for it to have actually happened." Harry said incredulously when he had turned back towards his 'patient'.

"Can you think of no-one? Do you know what is hidden at the school this very moment?" The centaur asked in return.

"The Philosopher's Stone? You mean it was Quirrell?" Harry replied disbelievingly. "No, he would never risk his life that way. The person who drinks unicorn blood will be cursed for life, never to recover from such an inherently evil act."

Harry suddenly heard a rustling behind the centaur and swiftly moved in front of it with his wand raised in expectation. He breathed a sigh of relief when Hagrid came into view, with Neville and the other two students behind him.

"Hullo, Firenze. Everything all right here?" Hagrid called out.

"Good evening, Hagrid. The danger has passed for now. I hope you are well?"

"Well enough. Neville mentioned that he found the injured unicorn when we came across him wandering the forest, being lost." Hagrid noticed the light creature lying on its side behind Harry and the centaur. "How is she?"

Harry tucked his wand back in its holster and turned back to the unicorn with relieved eyes, before replying with his back towards Hagrid, "She'll be fine."

All of a sudden, the magnificent creature stood up as if comprehending his response and slowly approached Harry. She pushed her head against his hand and Harry obligingly and disbelievingly patted the head and mane of the unicorn. He knew that adult unicorns were timid of males and only faintly trusting of females so the chance of this happening was miraculous to say the least.

"It seem' she like yeh, Harry." Hagrid said with awe clearly audible in his voice while the other three students stood behind the half-giant, gaping like a fish.

"It would seem so..." Harry trailed off before turning to the unicorn and looking her in the eye.

"Do you know where your family or the rest of your kind is?" He asked gently.

He got a vague feeling of an affirmative, though obviously nonverbal response.

"You should go back to them, and please don't wander off by yourself anymore. It's not safe for you here...." Harry said softly.

The unicorn once again nudged her head against his side as an affectionate gesture before turning away from him. She paused in front of him and shook her tail which made a few hairs fall down before moving off, deeper into the forest and presumably back towards its herd.

Harry reverently picked up the hairs and his empty potion vials while he kept smiling excitedly; he saved a unicorn today.....

Rumours of what had happened in the forest circled around Hogwarts the next few days. It was obvious that either Hagrid couldn't keep a secret in his life or far too many students listened to the bragging of the Boy-Who-Lived. Harry couldn't really care what Neville said had happened, since he knew the truth and had already told his friends, Kevin, Blaise and Tonks. He had obviously skipped the part of where it all connected to the Philosopher's stone according to Firenze because he still wanted to keep them unaware of that item.

Kevin had moaned for a whole day about the unfairness that Harry had interacted with an adult unicorn, something he himself would probably never experience in his entire life.

"But you were able to touch an actual mature unicorn, Harry. Don't you know how rare that is?" The Muggle-born started to whine once more after dinner.

All Harry did was raise an eyebrow at the boy in reply.

"Right. Of course you do." Kevin said deflated.

"By the way, when were you going to tell me that Hagrid took you to see the centaurs?" Harry asked his fellow first-year Ravenclaw, wondering about that little piece of information ever since Hagrid and Firenze talked about it on their way back to the castle during his detention last night.

"Well, you're always busy with your self-studies as you call it and I can't even find you half the time that you're hidden away in some unknown part of the castle." Kevin retorted.

"You're right. But I just have..." Harry started to explain but he was interrupted by his friend.

".... a lot to learn, I know. You've told me and Blaise that repeatedly so don't be irate when you miss something such as this. I should probably tell you that Hagrid also has a dragon...." Kevin trailed off, guessing what was coming from his friend and mentor in the magical world.

"HE WHAT?"

"Hagrid has a dragon currently hidden in his hut. He acquired a dragon egg from a Dragon dealer somewhere and has been heating it in a fire for the past month. Last week it finally hatched and I've been helping him with raising it, since the baby dragon has taken quite a liking to me." Kevin explicated happily.

"Un-freaking-believable!" Harry muttered to himself, while pitching the bridge of his nose and wondering how stupid some people could be.

"I suppose there's no use in pointing out that Hagrid lives in a wooden cabin?" Harry asked rhetorically, knowing his friend's love of animals what insurmountable.

Kevin only smiled sheepishly in return.

"Do you need my help?" Kevin gratefully shook his head negative.
"Have you already read 'Men Who Love Dragons Too Much'?"

together with 'From Egg to Inferno: a Dragon-Keeper's Guide' and at least recognized the species of the baby dragon?" Harry asked with a sigh.

That question made Kevin's jaw drop for a moment, before he came out of his stupor and shook his head good-naturedly. "I should have known that you are well-read on the subject. Hagrid and I spent at least a week searching for the appropriate books in the library. Is there anything you don't know?"

"Not that I can think of but if I do I'll let you know." Harry replied with a grin.

Kevin grinned back and answered Harry's former question. "It's a Norwegian Ridgeback, most likely a female one because of its ferocity but it is still too early to tell for certain."

"All right, I already guessed that would probably be the case." He acknowledged. "I'll come check it out this weekend. It should get me to loosen up a little because I've been a bit preoccupied with something else."

He had been thinking during the afternoon about the centaur's belief that the attacker of last night was actually Professor Quirrell. Harry couldn't help but feel sceptical of the idea but he was considering the possibility of it more and more.

If Quirrell had indeed been ingesting unicorn blood, then what was the reason for it? Why would he take on such a cursed life, what was worth that? Or more importantly, could the Philosopher's Stone actually negate the effect of unicorn blood with the Elixir of Life?

Harry had read up on the valuable magical stone during Christmas break at home, mainly since he didn't want to arouse suspicion by reading about it in the Hogwarts library. However, not much was known about it, other than the ability of turning any metal into gold and creating the Elixir of Life, which granted immortality to the drinker by lengthening their lifespan. He had briefly wondered if it might be able to cure his mother, but dismissed the thought quickly after that. If that were the case, then many people would have already been cured with the help of the stone.

But the thought of such an evil individual so close to an immensely important magical item, no matter whether it was Quirrell or not, made Harry feel restless. Because of that, he spent the week following the incident in the library, researching ways that might be protecting the stone.

It would have been logical to just hide the Philosopher's Stone under a Fidelius Charm, however Harry knew that wasn't the case. Dumbledore's manipulations could only go so far and with such a charm hiding the object, Neville would never be able to get to it, which is what Harry suspected was Dumbledore's true intention in the first place.

'No, that wouldn't work', he mused to himself. It would be obvious to assume that the stone was reasonably protected, but with charms and spells that could be beaten by the Boy-Who-Lived.

Now Harry was not an egotistical young man, but he did assess himself to be more skilled than Neville 'I-survived-the-bloody-Killing-Curse' Longbottom so he obviously would be able to break through the protections as well.

'No, those wouldn't be a problem', he reasoned. The real predicament lay in the number of charms that Dumbledore had for monitoring the protections of the stone. If his suspicions were correct and the Headmaster had indeed set up this entire thing for something to do with the Boy-Who-Lived, then he obviously wanted to observe or perhaps even be present for the final event.

And so Harry was reading everything he could find in the library about all kinds of monitoring charms. He learned how to evade or dispel such charms, depending on what kind of charm was used, which subsequently led him to research how to discover them in the first place. Harry realized though that Dumbledore had much more knowledge of these things, giving the old man an enormous disadvantage that Harry didn't think he would be able to overcome.

Stealth was the key to the success of such an undertaking which meant one thing, his father's invisibility cloak. This followed up with another problem though, one that Remus had mentioned in passing during stories of the Marauder's exploits.

His father had once been discovered by Professor McGonagall even though he was concealed under the cloak due to her heightened sense of smell, thanks to her Animagus form. This led the marauders to regularly start using the Refovio Charm, the one that removed all smells from the body. They however still suspected that Dumbledore was able to see through the cloak, since they never succeeded in pulling a prank on the headmaster with it.

Harry had already added up the facts behind this occurrence; Dumbledore obviously had his glasses charmed with aura-sight, giving him the ability to see through invisibility cloaks and Disillusionment Charms. This resulted in Harry spending another three days in the Hogwarts library, researching for a way to hide auras.

It was almost April when he finally deemed himself ready and fully prepared for the task of obtaining the Philosopher's Stone from the third-floor corridor. He waited until midnight on an ordinary Tuesday evening, before foraying out the Ravenclaw common room under the concealment of his invisibility cloak.

Harry had to wait a minute for Filch to pass the corridor up ahead but together with the Marauder's Map, not even Peeves the Poltergeist could deter him from his course. When he finally entered the off limits corridor, he just about expected someone to jump into view from behind a suit of armour, even though the map showed it was completely empty. He contemplated in the back of his mind to research a way to fool the map later on in the library.

He checked every locked door when going down the corridor and skipped out on entering nearly all since they only opened up to dusty old classrooms. Harry didn't know what it was exactly that he was looking for but thought it plausible to assume that the Philosopher's Stone wouldn't be hidden in an empty classroom. When he came upon one of the last doors, he repeated his former routine and starting with the Revealing Charm.

"Specialis Revelio"

The lock glowed blue for a moment, indicating that there was a rather simple Locking Charm on the door but no monitoring spells were placed upon it.

"Alohomora"

If someone was watching, then it must have been a bit disconcerting to hear Harry's voice out of nowhere, since he was still hidden under his invisibility cloak. A 'click' echoed through the corridor once more, signalling that the door was now unlocked. Harry opened it really carefully, just like with the other doors, since he was yet again completely unaware of what might be present behind it.

However he closed it immediately after and leant with his back against the door, taking deep breaths that he had been holding in earlier out of anticipation.

"You've got to be kidding me." He muttered to himself.

"Great.... Just great...." He said acerbically. 'Well, I guess that means I found the entrance to the hiding place of the Philosopher's Stone. I just hope Kevin doesn't find out that a Cerberus is being held in the school or he might try and go visit it.' Harry thought as he walked away.

'Well, that's going to take some more preparation but at least now I know I'm in the right place.' He reasoned to himself. Harry looked back towards the door where the Cerberus was behind and saluted.

"I'll be seeing you tomorrow, mutt."

(1) Taken from 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'

Beneath the trapdoor

The day after Harry had discovered the Cerberus on the third-floor corridor was surprisingly boring. When he woke up in the morning and remembered the schedule for the day, he groaned in frustration. It was Wednesday and that meant Astronomy class with the Gryffindors at midnight, making it unwise for him to go after the Philosopher's Stone that night.

Practical classes in Astronomy were always fun, mainly because of his superior telescope but also because he was Professor Sinistra's favorite student. Harry was the best first-year in Astronomy, and most of the other classes as well. Additionally, his telescope currently had a permanent place on top of the Astronomy tower, giving the Astronomy Professor unlimited access to it which earned him bonus points with the beautiful black-haired witch. It was still amusing to see other students, and not merely fellow classmates, glaring towards Harry whenever Sinistra addressed, waved or even just smiled at him.

However, today the class was bothersome, since it was in the way of his planned undertaking. Sure, the Philosopher's Stone could wait, but Harry had spent almost two hours yesterday night trying to figure out the best way to get past the Cerberus when he returned to his dorm. His knowledge of the not-so-mythical creature was limited and researching it in the Hogwarts library would be suspicious but in the end he reasoned simply that it was still a dog, making it vulnerable to the same things.

Thursday went by just as quietly as the day before but if people were to observe Harry Potter closely, they would see that he was anxious about something. Harry for his part couldn't wait to implement his plan for the Cerberus and was very curious about what might be beneath the trapdoor, if there even was anything below it. When Transfiguration had finally ended, he breathed a sigh of relief and walked towards the library to finish up the homework McGonagall had set for the class.

"What's up with you?" A voice interrupted his musings.

"Huh? Oh, hey Wayne. Nothing much, why?" Harry greeted as he turned to his Hufflepuff friend.

"You look more eager and excited than the Weasley twins when they've spiked your food with something. You want to tell me why you've got ants in your pants?" Wayne asked.

"My uncle's inn is under scrutiny of the Ministry of Magic and I've been waiting for a reply from him. The aurors performed an unannounced inspection of the place and we've been anticipating a response from the Ministry ever since." Harry said without thinking.

'Marauder lesson no. 1: If you have to lie, always try to stick as close to the truth as possible, it makes the lie all the more convincing and you don't have to think much about it.' Harry thought with a small grin. His uncle was reluctant to teach him that one but did so anyway because of the benefits.

And it was true. His uncle had written him last week in a small state of panic informing Harry of the visit from the aurors. It took him three letters to get Remus calmed down sufficiently to be able to explain the inn's untouchable status with Lord Potter being the owner. Harry had cleared everything with the goblins in advance and they guaranteed that there was nothing the Ministry of Magic could do to close the inn.

Sharptooth had already expected trouble from the governing body when he was setting up the business, since several purebloods in influential positions at the Ministry deeply loathed half-breeds and dark creatures. Therefore, he had advised Harry to take up his Lordship, which not only allowed him access to the Potter family vault but also made any business venture of his invulnerable to Ministry interference.

"Oh... Is there any risk they can force you to close the inn down?" The Hufflepuff inquired sympathetically.

"No, there isn't." Harry cut off abruptly.

The greatest consequence of it all could be that Lord Potter would have to present the 'Blood Moon Inn' in front of the entire Wizengamot, giving a detailed explanation as to its purpose and income prospect. If this was the case, then Harry would have to appoint a representative for him because he was still underage and thus not allowed in the Wizengamot chambers.

Wayne fortunately left Harry alone after that, probably recognizing his agitated state which he must have attributed to the subject matter of their conversation.

Harry spent the rest of the afternoon in the library, doing his homework and some light reading until he left for dinner in the Great Hall. He didn't want to draw attention to himself on this particular evening so he showed his face as usual before stealthily going up to the Room of Requirement with the help of the Marauder's map. He spent the remaining night working off his anxiousness by practicing hexes, jinxes and curses on an animated training dummy. By the time Harry was finished, the dummy had several charred spots, holes and no more arms while its head was severed off and lying to the side.

He headed back to the dorm just before curfew and pretended to go to sleep at the same time as his dorm mates. About half an hour past midnight, Harry got up and exited the dorm, knowing Filch was the only one still prowling around the castle. He had been checking the Marauder's Map every fifteen minutes with a whispered Lumos Charm inside his bed's curtains after he was certain his dorm mates were sound asleep. It seemed that the prefect's patrol of the hallways ended at midnight and when they finally returned to the common rooms, practically everyone had gone to bed.

Right now Harry stood, hidden once more under the invisibility cloak, in front of the door behind which the Cerberus was waiting. He had only barely managed to sneak his way past Filch, having been followed by that blasted cat of his, Mrs. Norris. However the charms he had researched for this purpose did what they were supposed to do, since he promptly lost the cat on the moving staircases. He had currently silenced his feet and was spelled with an Aura-Masking Charm together with the ever useful scent-removing 'Refovio' Charm.

Harry had come prepared this night, and so he removed a packet of raw meat from his bag. He had laced the meat beforehand with ten vials of Sleeping Draught and had another ten in his bag just in case. With human beings, the amount of Sleeping Draught determined the speed at which one fell asleep and how long that sleep lasted. However the effectiveness of the potion was also dependent on the volume and tiredness of the target.

As such, Harry reasoned that the massive Cerberus would probably require a rather large dose for it to have any noticeable effect. The amount of ten vials was an educated guess from him, estimated on the ferocity and sheer size of the beast, though it was still on the assumption that it would affect a Cerberus the same way as it did a human being.

Harry was therefore quite pleased when he heard the three-headed dog yawn loudly not even five minutes after he closed the door. He had simply thrown the meat inside, trusting on the never-ending hunger of an animal to devour the food completely. And it seems he was correct since after another minute or two, a soft snoring could be heard coming from behind the door, indicating that his plan was successful.

Harry cautiously entered the room, checking for any more surprises now that he had the chance to properly look around. There was nothing other than the Cerberus sleeping on top of the trapdoor fortunately, so he just carefully levitated it to the side.

"Good doggy...." He murmured quietly.

He proceeded to check the trapdoor with the Revealing Charm and detected some kind of Proximity Ward on it.

Now Harry didn't know much about wards, other than what they were. He had partially dedicated himself to the fascinating subject of Ancient Runes of various origins; however the subject of Wards was on a whole other level and much too difficult for him currently. The subject of Ward and Curse Breaking though was even more complex and he hadn't even read anything about it yet.

Therefore, he did the only thing that came to mind.... He checked the surface of the trapdoor for any runic arrays that could be seen on the surface. He thought it would be logical to hide the rune-carvings or at least place them somewhere they couldn't be seen or reached, as was the case with ward stones that generally resided within the wards. However as demonstrated so many times before, the Wizarding World and its inhabitants were not using their common sense and a small set of runes could be seen inscribed in the surface of the wooden trapdoor.

He took out a plain dagger that he had taken with him just in case and filed the runes off with the edge of the blade. Another Revealing Charm showed that the Proximity Ward was indeed disabled and Harry proceeded to cautiously open the trapdoor. A black void was all that could be seen from above the hole in the floor and, after checking once more if the Cerberus was still asleep, Harry took a leap of faith and just jumped down.

It was tricky to stay constantly hidden under the invisibility cloak and in the meantime perform the necessary movements however he managed it flawlessly. Harry guessed that he could probably do away with the cloak but didn't want to take any chances so he stayed concealed under it just in case.

The dark hole revealed to be a shorter jump than Harry expected and he was even more surprised to land on something soft. It was still dark as night which made it all the more creepy when he started to feel something slithering around his legs and waist. He sensed around in the darkness, trying to discern what it was that he landed on until Harry felt an almost rubberlike tentacle take hold of his right hand and keeping it in place.

He reacted out of instinct and immediately drew his Nundu wand from its left arm holster with a quick flick of his wrist. A quick "Lumos" illuminated the entire room and Harry felt the bindings disentangle themselves even before he noticed it. He looked around him and saw several branches of Devil's Snare retreat from the light of his wand. He stood up, dusted himself off and walked towards the stone passageway to his right, only pausing briefly to check and see if the cloak was still completely covering him.

Harry checked his path frequently with the Revealing Charm to see if there were any other intruder alerts like the Proximity Ward from before however none showed up, much to his surprise. The passageway sloped downward slightly until the end came into view and before long, Harry found himself standing in a brightly lit chamber.

The chamber had a high ceiling and Harry could almost swear that he was watching keys with wings fluttering around high up in the air. The door on the opposite side of the room happened to be locked with a spell that Harry didn't recognize but 'Alohomora' didn't seem to have any effect. Harry thought it was obvious that 'their' intention

was to snatch the right key to open the door that way and sure enough, in the corner of the chamber were two broomsticks hovering in the air.

However Harry had something else in mind. He pointed his Nundu wand in the air, mainly since he hadn't seen it fit to place it back within its holster, and whispered "Accio Key", while focusing completely on the right one to unlock the door. The key attempted to resist his Summoning Charm by flapping its wings frantically however soon enough, one wing broke due to the effort required after which the key came zooming into Harry's outstretched hand.

The next room revealed to be a giant chess set, much to his dismay. He was never one to play around with games and simply hadn't spent enough time behind a chessboard to be able to play his way across. However due to the fact that he was still hidden under his various concealments, Harry was able to just walk past the opposite side's chess pieces and came upon the next door.

The door revealed no spells other than a rather simple Locking Charm linked to the giant chess set which was quickly overcome with 'Alohomora'. Harry was getting more and more suspicious of the fact that the 'intended' ways to overcome the protections were in the capabilities of a normal first-year. He briefly thought about what Nicolas Flamel would say if the ancient man knew exactly what was currently protecting his stone.

Harry had to hold his breath to prevent the disgusting smell from filling his nostrils as soon as he opened the door and encountered the second Troll of his life. Fortunately, he managed to bypass the dozing creature unseen since it wouldn't do to kill yet another Troll. That would not only make it irrelevant to pass through the protections undetected but it might also make him a suspect when 'they' discovered that the stone was missing from its hiding place.

The instant Harry had pulled open the next door and crossed the threshold, a purple fire sprang up behind him in the doorway. Up ahead, a black fire shot up in front of a door opposite to the one he came from, preventing him access to the following room. Harry moved forward cautiously towards a single round table in the middle of the chamber, which had seven differently shaped bottles standing on it in a line. After checking to make sure nothing was spelled to

detect an intruder, he carefully picked up the roll of parchment that was lying next to the bottles.

Danger lies before you, while safety lies behind,

Two of us will help you, which ever you would find,

One among us seven will let you move ahead,

Another will transport the drinker back instead,

Two among our number hold only nettle wine,

Three of us are killers, waiting bidden in line.

Choose, unless you wish to stay here forevermore,

To help you in your choice, we give you these clues four:

First, however slyly the poison tries to hide

You will always find some on nettle wine's left side;

Second, different are those who stand at either end,

But if you would move onward, neither is your friend;

Third, as you see clearly, all are different size,

Neither dwarf nor giant holds death in their insides;

Fourth, the second left and the second on the right

Are twins once you taste them, though different at first sight.

Harry smiled as he read the parchment, although no one could see it of course because he was still hidden under his invisibility cloak. 'A riddle...' This was more his strong suit instead of childish games such as chess. He checked the bottles in front of him before reading the parchment once more. It was quite easy to figure out so he quickly deciphered that he needed to take the smallest bottle to go forward while the last bottle on the right was to get back. He slipped

the latter in the pocket of his robes and swallowed the contents of the former before moving towards the next door.

When the potion in the bottle started working, Harry felt as though ice was flooding his body and the black flames in the doorway didn't seem to affect him at all. He briefly wondered if a Flame-Freezing Charm could have the same effect as the potion had on these black flames, but he dismissed that possibility shortly afterwards. Though Harry considered himself a rather intelligent and talented wizard, he would nearly always require a fair amount of practice before being able to actually perform a spell after reading about it.

The following chamber was a surprise, since it appeared to be the last one. There was no exiting door other than the one he just came from, which would lead him back to the third-floor corridor. Harry had kept his vigilance and had checked repeatedly with the Revealing Charm for any kind of intruder alerts however so far, none showed up.

In the middle of the chamber was an ancient looking, but beautiful mirror. It was almost as high as the ceiling, with an ornate gold frame and was standing on two clawed feet. There was an inscription at the top and Harry had to move closer to be able to read it. Though even then, it still didn't make any sense to him.

Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi.

'A code, perhaps?' He wondered.

By now Harry was standing in front of the mirror however there was no reflection, seeing as he was still under his invisibility cloak. The Revealing Charm showed a plethora of spells on the mirror, many of which he didn't recognize. He did realize though that the mirror had another kind of proximity spell on it however this one was different than the ward on the trapdoor. The charm showed no string leading off to the caster somewhere which meant that the spell triggered something within the mirror.

He looked at the nonsensical phrase again and deciphered it after a few minutes of brainstorming. 'The text was backwards!'

"I show not your face but your hearts desire", Harry mumbled.

'That's interesting.' He thought as he briefly wondered what his greatest desire was. It was also quite curious for this magical artefact to be placed here, where the last protection of the Philosopher's Stone should be. If he thought about it, things were actually quite simple.

The professors had probably contributed to the protection of the stone and this mirror was its last defense, perhaps even placed here by Dumbledore himself. Care of Magical Creatures for the Cerberus, Herbology for the Devil's Snare, Charms for the flying keys, Transfiguration for the life-sized chess pieces, Potions with the riddle and now this. Every subject was represented as if it was just a simple final exam!

Harry shook his head disappointedly at the absurdity of it all and turned his attention back to the mirror. If he thought about it logically, then this mirror would show the potential thief the Philosopher's Stone that probably wasn't here at all. However the Wizarding World wasn't logical and Harry knew that the valuable magical item was probably present somewhere in this chamber.

But after searching the entire room, with Aura-sight lenses or without, the stone was nowhere to be seen. That left the mirror as the only thing present in the room and Harry didn't know what its significance here represented. Coming to a decision with no other options, Harry stood in front of the mirror and removed his invisibility cloak. After all, the Revealing Charm didn't show any monitoring charms in the room so he assumed it safe enough to show himself.

The mirror was immediately activated and Harry gasped as he saw his reflection. It was not his own reflection however which caused his reaction. It was the woman standing behind him.

He recognized her instantly and Harry felt tears forming in his eyes as a result. The mirror was correct; this was indeed his greatest desire. In the reflection, the beautiful woman with dark red hair and vibrant green eyes standing behind him was undeniably his mother; awoken from her coma and unconditionally supporting her son with a hand on his shoulder. However his reflection paid her no mind at all, for it only tried to make eye contact with the real Harry.

When he finally did remove his eyes from the image of his mother, his reflection smiled at him. The mirror image of him put his hand

into its pocket and pulled out a familiar looking blood-red stone. The reflection nodded seriously at him and put it back in its pocket, before Harry felt something drop in his own pocket. He quickly fished it out and before him, in his own hands, was the actual Philosopher's Stone...

Harry's first thought was, 'Is this a joke?', however that quickly turned to anger. How could anyone be so stupid as to place such a powerful magical item in a mirror? For all he knew, simply destroying the mirror would have released the stone and put it in the hands of whatever evil wizard that wanted to use it.

Surely there were better ways to protect such things. Hell, you could easily place it under a Fidelius Charm, lay it in the middle of the Great Hall and it would still be better protected than this!

However, despite the loathe he felt towards the ones responsible for this charade, Harry was overjoyed as well. So far, he had managed to get the stone to relative safety without any trouble whatsoever. Now, if he managed to get back quietly, then he would have done the whole thing discreetly as well.

Harry whipped the cloak back over himself and checked his other concealment charms, hiding himself from view once again. He easily skipped past the 'protections' on the way back, using the potion in his pocket for the purple flames, silently sneaking past the troll and simply ignoring the transfigured chess set. He grabbed one of the brooms in the corner of the room with the flying keys and flew over the Devil's Snare and up to the trapdoor. The Cerberus could still be heard snoring quietly, so Harry simply opened the hatch and flew into the first room before banishing the broom back.

Everything seemed to have gone as planned and he almost congratulated himself on a job well-done. However, when Harry took out the Marauder's Map to see if it was safe to walk out the door to the third-floor corridor, he noticed a dot with the name 'Albus Dumbledore' coming towards him. He swore softly and thought about what to do.

He may have tripped some kind of alarm which caused the headmaster to suspect that the stone was no longer safe. There was no other option than to simply run and hide. Dumbledore was currently descending on the moving staircases, almost coming up to

the third floor. Heading for the Ravenclaw common room now would place Harry in the direct path of the headmaster and that was something he wished to avoid.

That Harry was currently invisible and had his aura masked, didn't mean that he wanted to put it all to the test and be near the powerful wizard when the Philosopher's Stone was still in his pocket. For all he knew there was some way that the headmaster could sense the thing, simply because it was a powerful magical object. The simple tracking charm that was placed on the stone was easily dispelled earlier however there could be other spells on the item that had somehow made it past the Revealing Charm.

Therefore, he decided to hide in one of the abandoned classrooms on the third-floor corridor near the room that had the Cerberus inside. Harry restored the rune-carvings with 'Reparo' but he had no clue whatsoever if it would re-establish the Proximity Ward. He also tried to 'ennervate' the three-headed dog to avoid any uncertainty of suspicion, however it still seemed to be under the influence of the massive dose of Sleeping Draught. He exited, replaced the simple Locking Charm on the door and quickly walked down the corridor to the last classroom.

Not more than a minute later, while Harry hid in the corner of the room that was farthest away from the scene of his crime, the dot of 'Albus Dumbledore' on the Marauder's map approached the room with the Cerberus in it. A few seconds after that, to the young boy's surprise and relief, a loud dog's barking could be heard through the closed door indicating that the Cerberus was currently very much awake.

Harry eventually managed to breathe again when the sound became muffled and he noticed Dumbledore walk back towards the stairwell on the map, apparently satisfied that the protections were undisturbed. He still chose to remain in his position until ten minutes after the dot of 'Albus Dumbledore' was motionless in the Headmaster's office, just to be certain that he had managed to get away clean.

By the time Harry had returned to his dorm and had the Philosopher's Stone safely locked up in his trunk, it was already three o'clock in the night and he felt as tired as a dog, no pun intended. He was completely spent from the anticipation and anxiety

of getting caught and that caused him to fall asleep the moment his face hit his pillow. If anyone were to check on him two minutes later, they would see a fulfilled grin on the contended face of a sleeping Harry Potter....

The protections are from the original first book 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'.

The chapter is relatively short and doesn't have much interesting things, my apologies for that however I preserve the right to rewrite this chapter properly when I want. This way, it's easier.

End of First Year

"Come in!" Could be heard from behind the door.

"You wanted to see me, Professor Flitwick?" Harry asked after entering the office of his Head of House.

"Yes, welcome, Mr. Potter. Have a seat. Would you like some tea?" The tiny professor asked jovially.

"No, thank you. Could you tell me what this is about, sir?" Harry inquired curiously.

It was a week after he had taken the Philosopher's Stone and he was currently sitting in the office of Professor Flitwick. Harry was scared at first for having been summoned however that quickly changed to irritation when Kevin explained why he was called for.

Professor Flitwick had the custom to speak with first-years from his house to see how well they are adjusting to the surroundings of Hogwarts castle. Most of the first-year Ravenclaws had already been asked to come by before the Christmas holidays, however Harry suspected that ever since their first encounter in Charms class, Flitwick had been keeping his distance from him.

He didn't mind of course. If a professor left him alone in class which meant that he could advance at his own pace, then Harry was all for it. But it seemed the tiny professor couldn't delay this visit any longer and had decided to finally meet with him like he did with the others.

"Yes, of course. You see, I always try to connect to my Raven's on some level and follow their progress in school. This meeting is merely a way for me to get to know you a little better and discuss any issues you might have." Professor Flitwick explained.

"I usually meet with all first-years before the Christmas holidays however after our first conversation I thought it prudent if I let you have some more time to settle in." He continued.

"So what do you think about Hogwarts, does it match your expectations?" Flitwick inquired interestedly.

"It's fine, I guess." Harry replied hesitantly.

"Really? Then what do you think about your classes? I don't think this comes as a surprise to you but you are probably the brightest student among the first-years." The tiny professor exclaimed.

"Classes are... inadequate for the lack of a better word." Harry said thoughtfully.

The professor seemed unsurprised but still a bit irritated. "Could you explain that, Mr. Potter?"

Harry looked at the professor for a while to determine the genuineness of his interest in Harry's view. The tiny man had to force himself not to fidget under the first-year's stare before that first-year nodded and spoke his honest opinion.

"The practical subjects are rather undemanding in my eyes. Most of the students learn how to perform the easy spells during classes and if not, then they do so by themselves after that class. I find that, if students were to actually prepare for the classes, they would have already studied those spells and managed or at least tried to perform it. The class lecture about that spell would only serve to correct any mistakes and would allow for more time to be spent on the more difficult spells."

"Charms, Transfiguration and Defense Against the Dark Arts entail so much more than the curriculum for the seven years of Hogwarts contain. The average graduated student could spend another seven years studying the same subjects and they would still not have run out of new material." Harry said passionately.

"You are correct, Mr. Potter. However, we also have to take into account that not every student is able to perform the spells successfully that quickly. We need to adjust the lesson plans of our classes to the average student to maintain a suitable learning environment." Professor Flitwick tried to placate the prodigal student before him.

"So you're saying that you need to 'dumb down' the lesson material to allow the more incompetent students to keep up?" Harry asked incredulously. "I thought this was the best magical school of witchcraft and wizardry in the world!"

"You really are a lot like your mother, Mr. Potter. Ms. Evans asked me the exact same thing once." Flitwick said with the emotion clearly audible in his voice.

"And yet there hasn't changed a single thing. Tell me Professor, has there ever been a student known to have skipped a year?"

Harry was curious about this for a while now but he hadn't found any record of such a thing ever occurring. He still wasn't sure if it would be a clever thing to do for him. He had plenty of reasons for wanting to stay within Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for the full seven years however there were also several positive aspects to be unrestricted from it.

"Not that I am aware of. Why do you ask that?" Flitwick replied confusedly.

"I'm asking because the contradiction is just absurd. The school is willing to lower its standards and weaken its curriculum to provide a suitable education for dimwitted children. However, it simply refuses to supply the more intelligent with the opportunity to excel in their schooling."

"There is always the library to study from, Mr. Potter." Flitwick chided.

"That's true, but if I wanted to study merely from books in a library then tell me what I'm doing in a school?" Harry calmly responded.

Flitwick took a deep breath before conceding defeat. "Very well, I can see that you have a point, however unusual it might be for a first-year to bring this to my attention."

Harry only grinned in return. He knew that there was nothing the professor could do to change the current lesson plans for classes. Muggle-borns were certainly able to adapt to a more intense learning schedule, since they didn't know what to expect anyway. However the purebloods would never allow their precious children to be outdone by the harder working offspring of Muggles, even if it was for the improvement of the Wizarding World.

"Will that be all, Professor? I am a rather busy student, you see." Harry asked politely, hiding his irritation at having his project interrupted.

He was going to start preparing the ingredients for the Animagus Revealing Potion in the Room of Requirements. It was a difficult potion to make that would take ten days to complete. Despite the fact that the ingredients were difficult to acquire, Harry had them all stored already in his trunk since he had been planning on doing this for quite some time now.

The potion supposedly causes the drinker to fall in a meditative state in which he or she encounters their inner animal in its natural habitat. Reports about the precise result of the potion vary significantly so Harry was extremely curious about his own experience of the concoction's effect.

He had already warned Remus that he planned on taking the potion at the inn during the Easter holidays in two weeks, since it could render him unconscious for up to 24 hours. If he stayed off the radar for that amount of time here at Hogwarts then people would notice his absence and become suspicious.

"I'm sure that you can spare a few minutes for your Head of House, can't you Mr. Potter? I might even make it worth your while," was Flitwick's response.

The tiny professor continued when he saw that he had his student's full attention because of his last remark.

"There was another reason that I hadn't met with you earlier in the year. Despite our grievances in my first lesson with you, I did notice that you were rather proficient in the subject of Charms, considering you hadn't received any instruction on it yet. I decided to watch you and see if your talent in my subject was remotely similar to your mother's and came to the discovery that it even exceeded hers."

"You see, your mother came to me one day with the same complaints you have about the syllabus. She felt unchallenged in some of the classes like yourself and asked me for additional reading on Charms to learn on her own."

Harry nodded and stayed quiet, guessing that the professor had more to say on the matter.

Professor Flitwick seemed to get a contemplative expression before smiling kindly. "It's remarkable to see that even though you seem to have inherited your mother's talent in Charms and your father's skill in Transfiguration, you're still completely different in character. By now, your mother would have been pestering me with questions and your father would have been proud if not a bit pompous because of my compliment. Yet here you sit before me, waiting patiently for me to finish my monologue like a perfect gentleman."

Harry blushed slightly due to the 'gentleman' comment but he still kept quiet, causing the tiny professor to chuckle approvingly. Flitwick got up from his chair and walked to the back of his office, getting a book from one of the low shelves and placing on the table before him. Harry tried to read the cover however it seemed that the title was only on the spine of the book, which he couldn't see from his current position.

"I loaned this book on Charms to your mother back then since I thought she would find it particularly educating. Although that was during her third year, mind you. I would of course never consider extending the same offer to a first year since they couldn't possibly apprehend such advanced material, not to mention the questionable nature of the spells inside."

Harry watched as the professor theatrically checked the time on his watch and got up from his chair.

"Oh dear." He sighed dramatically. "It seems that we'll have to cut this meeting short unfortunately. I still have essays to grade and am rather in need of a bathroom break." He paused on his way towards a backdoor in his office which Harry suspected led to the professor's living quarters. "I would be a shame if such a valuable book appears to have gone missing from its place when I come back. I can only hope that the one who took it has the decency to return it whenever that person is done with it." And with that last remark, the professor disappeared behind the door.

Harry quickly picked up the book from the professor's desk and checked the title: 'Charms: More than Making Things Float!' He swiftly browsed through a few of the pages and noticed that they

were all about combat charms, some of which Tonks had already taught him in their dueling practices.

Harry left Flitwick's office with a big smile on his face, planning to give Tonks a few surprises next time they met for training.

Nothing exciting happened in the following two weeks fortunately since Harry was extremely busy with brewing the Animagus Revealing Potion. He had scheduled the process beforehand in detail by starting it in the middle of the night so he wouldn't miss any of the time-dependent additions to the potion. It unfortunately resulted in him skipping lunch several times or missing sleep for a couple of hours however he realized that it would be worth it in the end.

Remus mentioned his father had done it in the summer before his fifth year together with Peter and Sirius, which gave them plenty of time however Harry couldn't wait any longer. He wanted to complete the transformation before the end of the year and above all, he wanted to know what his Animagus form would be. There were rumors of your characteristics defining the animal you turn into but that didn't help Harry one bit, since comparing his personality to an animal was rather difficult.

On that next Saturday, April 19th, Harry and his friends were travelling towards London in a compartment on the Hogwarts express. Harry could barely contain his excitement about the potion which was sitting finished in his trunk, together with the Philosopher's Stone. He had decided to leave the stone in there, reckoning the security on the trunk was currently better than any other place he could possibly hide it.

Kevin and Blaise were discussing the dragon that Hagrid had kept hidden in his hut for the better part of three months. Harry was only vaguely listening since he was still thinking of his Animagus form but he tuned in again when he suddenly heard the name 'Longbottom'.

"... Longbottom and his crony discovered that Hagrid had a dragon on the grounds and somehow spilled the beans to Draco Malfoy about it. Consequently, they arranged to have the Norwegian Ridgeback picked up by a small group of dragon keepers who agreed to take her in at a dragon reserve in Romania." Kevin told the others.

"Let me guess, Malfoy somehow managed to get them in trouble for it?" Harry interceded while rolling his eyes; their rivalry was just so idiotic sometimes.

"Yeah, apparently he did. Because Longbottom and Weasley were caught out in the hallways after curfew around midnight by Professor McGonagall the day before yesterday and lost Gryffindor 100 points." Blaise mentioned with a smile, remembering the shunning the two got from their own house.

"Interesting. Why would they move the dragon in the middle of the night?" Harry mused out loud.

"I don't know, it's not like I can relate to what those Gryffindorks are thinking all the time." Blaise said indifferently.

Harry frowned. He didn't like house prejudices and it seemed his Slytherin companion unconsciously started to go along with her house's standing on Gryffindor. He agreed with her that both Longbottom and Weasley were incompetent fools however that didn't mean he hated the entire house of lions. He dismissed it and thought about something that came up in their previous discussion.

"I wonder how they managed to arrange the dragon keepers from Romania to come all the way here....." Harry mentioned pensively.

Daphne, finally having to add something for the conversation, spoke up. "Rumor has it that Weasley has a brother who works at the dragon reserve, so it's reasonable to assume he's the one they wrote to for help."

Harry smiled at her. Daphne was kind of the opposite of a gossip queen. She seemed to know something about everyone at Hogwarts, or in the lower years at least that is. Once you managed to get on her good side, she was a great source of information. He briefly wondered what she might know about him but Harry dismissed that thought shortly afterwards, trusting her to keep the few secrets she might be aware of.

The older Weasley brother's occupation had him thinking of what he wanted to do once he graduated from Hogwarts and cured his mother. Harry couldn't picture himself getting up every morning to go

to work day in, day out. He had read that in the past wizards used to travel after their education, discovering the wonders of the world of magic like some kind of 'rite of passage'. This appealed to him, thinking he could visit the dragon reserve in Romania and similar sights around the world.

It was green everywhere, he had never seen so many different colours of green in his life.

His current eyesight was so much better than usual, despite the fact that he had his eyes corrected three and a half years ago. Every shade of green was indeed different but less clear, as if the light was dampened somehow. He quickly realized that he saw better in the shade than the light in his current state of being, making it an almost surreal experience.

All around him were trees and plants so dense that he could hardly see above the forest canopy. The sun was high in the sky and its light only barely filtered through the leaves and branches up above him. It was warm despite the lack of direct sunlight, but a moist kind of warm, giving off a really comfortable feeling in the jungle.

Animal sounds could be heard coming from different sides but they all seemed so far away, like it shouldn't really be possible for him to hear them and the animals nearby had been chased off by something. Somewhere on his right side, the sound of running water could be heard, probably originating from a calm stream that was only a short distance away.

He started towards the stream but was immediately surprised yet again by his short, but easy strides. Climbing and crawling through the forest proved to be a particularly undemanding task, with his powerful black limbs. By the time he had reached the stream more than a quarter of a mile away, he wasn't even remotely fatigued.

When he approached the small river to drink from it, he noticed a few other animals stiffen that were drinking from the stream as well, like they were afraid of him. He shrugged it off indifferently and diverted his attention to the flat surface of the water before him. When he saw his reflection however, he gasped abruptly or he would have if he were human at that moment.

For staring back at him from the surface of the water, with vibrant green eyes shining of happiness and a black fur as dark as night, was a fierce-looking black jaguar.

Harry woke up with a smile on his face. The potion worked a bit differently than he expected but the important part was that it had succeeded. His Animagus form was a jaguar that was completely black, they were really rare in the Muggle world. He didn't know much about them so he planned on going to a Muggle public library in London for some books about that particular feline.

When he came into the pub section of the inn, he was suddenly tackled in a hug from his werewolf uncle.

"Harry! Are you alright? Do you have a headache? I was going to call for a healer if you hadn't woken up before noon....."

"I'm fine Remus, really. It's not a big deal. I thought I told you that the potion could take up to 24 hours before I snapped out of it. You said it's not even noon, so it barely lasted for twelve hours....." Harry trailed off, wondering what could have gone wrong that made his uncle worry so much.

"Harry....." Remus hesitated before apparently deciding to tell him since he would find out anyway.

"It's been more than 36 hours since you took the potion and fell unconscious..... At first, I thought you might have made a mistake with the potion," Harry made a face at that. "But you mentioned that you expected something like that, so I decided to just wait and see what happened. However when you didn't wake up last night I was almost sure something was wrong." Remus explained with a relieved expression since his cub was in good health.

"So, what happened? Did you find out what your form is?" He asked eagerly.

"I did," Harry started with a mysterious grin. "But I'm not going to tell you what it is yet. I do however have to go to a bookstore or the public library in London tomorrow to get some books on it though. So you'll just have to wait and see." He finished with a wide smile.

Harry was sure that he could transfigure his arms and legs into paws and get used to the feeling. However to completely transform into ones Animagus form, one had to be intimately familiar with its internal organs, general measurements and other features/characteristics. The temporary transfigurations to ones body are simply necessary intermediate states to accomplish the actual Animagus transformation by means of meditation and recollection.

"Could your form have anything to do with the reason that it took so long for you to wake up?" Remus asked after contemplating his nephew's refusal to state his form.

"I don't know," Harry said thoughtfully. "The animal is uncommon enough in the Muggle world however I've never heard of a magical version of it so I don't think that has anything to do with it. Perhaps the book with the potion was just mistaken about the timeframe." He mused out loud, careful not to give anything away about his form so he wouldn't ruin the prank that he had been planning.

"Perhaps," Remus agreed, though he didn't look like he believed that to be the case.

By the time the next Saturday had arrived and he was set to return to Hogwarts, Harry was already prepared to try out the actual transformation. That was in spite of another amateur Quidditch-match, a couple of nights discussing the classes at Hogwarts with Jasper Moreau and several hours of advanced decorating transfigurations in his room. He had been covertly researching everything he could about the jaguar, always keeping the reading material hidden from his uncle, lest he figure it out.

The jaguar was known in the Muggle world as the most powerful feline of the Western Hemisphere. It is a solitary animal, preferring not to run in pack and to be a stalk-and-ambush kind of predator, taking any opportunity for all kinds of prey when it arose. Its bite and paws are enormously powerful to strike its target, making it an enemy to be feared in the forest. A jaguar is a crepuscular animal, meaning that their active hours are around dawn and dusk.

When Harry had summed up these facts, he couldn't help but agree that its characteristics matched his, but he would have never been able to come up with it in advance.

At the moment he was waiting on platform 9¾ for his friends to arrive, having come early because of Remus waking him up at an ungodly hour this morning. His uncle had already left him there since he had the inn to run, but Harry didn't mind of course. The inn was quickly becoming a really popular place to hang out for customers of all kinds. Goblins regularly came after their work at Gringotts since they received the standard discount. Werewolves usually stayed for a few nights around the full moon, whether before or after didn't really matter. And vampires just seemed to enjoy the peaceful interaction with other species, at least after Jasper had cleared it with them.

Surprisingly though, some Aurors that came by one day to scope the place out returned after a few days with several other Ministry workers that were most likely unprejudiced of other species. This seemed to encourage other 'normal' wizards and witches and pretty soon, the place was buzzing with activity. Remus even had to hire his own house elf, Hugo, despite Blinky's protests, to waiter some of the customers and help Blinky with the cleaning.

But now Harry was waiting for Blaise and the others to arrive so he could return to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Twenty minutes later, they were all sitting in a compartment together on the already moving train. Longbottom and Malfoy fortunately stayed at Hogwarts for the Easter holidays so they had a peaceful ride where Harry got a few extra hours of sleep with an equally tired Blaise leaning on his shoulder.

If he were to observe Remus Lupin at that moment, who had just entered his nephew's bedroom, he would have been jumping in his seat from anticipation. The werewolf approached Harry's bed to return a few things to their proper place in the messy room and his gaze fell on his nephew's bedside table.

Remus' breath hitched for a moment before his eyes rolled up to the back of his head and he fainted forward, fortunately onto the bed.

Blinky entered the room fifteen minutes later to retrieve the inn's caretaker and to clean up her master's bedroom. She looked around while moving through the room before she too noticed the books spread out on the bedside table.

There, lying for all to see, were three books with the cover facing the entrance of the room; 'Giants of the Safari', 'What is your favorite kind of Elephant' and 'Elephants, the biggest animals on land'.

The next few weeks passed along quietly. There were only six weeks after the Easter holidays before the school year ended which had the castle in a fretful state. Exams were approaching quickly so practically every student was anxious and diligently studying to achieve at least passing grades. Harry's dueling lessons with Tonks were less frequent since she required the extra time to study for her N.E.W.T.'s, which in turn gave him additional opportunities to work on the Animagus transformation.

It was during one of those training sessions that Tonks brought up something unexpected.

"Harry?" Tonks asked hesitantly while she silently fired off two Disarming Charms.

"Yeah, Tonks?" was Harry's response as he silently parried one of them away with a small shield at the height of his wand and ducked under the other.

Tonks had made certain that Harry had mastered silent casting before she went all out against him just like Harry made sure that her Occlumency shields were sufficient to block passive Legilimency. Silent casting was difficult to learn for him since he was only a first-year but he had gradually succeeded with some of the spells they were constantly using in the duels. The young wizard simply reckoned he could practice the 'other' spells during the summer when his schedule wasn't as hectic as it currently was.

Occlumency proved to be an important part of dueling for Tonks since Harry had started applying Legilimency whenever he could. Being able to 'read' the spells and where they would be fired was an unbeatable advantage against any opponent so Harry wanted to master such an ability quickly. Tonks went down the first few matches when she used silent casting, which annoyed her to no end, before she figured it out and expelled his probe from her mind.

Harry's proficiency in Legilimency had increased rapidly because Tonks was practicing her Occlumency at the same time. Whenever

she had a breakthrough in the shielding of her mind, Harry had to be extra inventive in his attacks to be able to read her. He still had no subtlety whatsoever, so the cheerful Metamorphmagus was always able to force him out almost instantly.

The passive Legilimency was something he read about and was currently working on together with Tonks. It was stated as reading the present thoughts of an opponent without delving completely into their minds and searching through their memories. Harry found it extremely difficult at first to be able to 'read' others while keeping in one's own mind but he was starting to steadily improve in it.

The book Remus had sent about it, 'The Mind Arts: Legilimency', explained the art in only the vaguest sense stating that every technique is personalized and that no one's attack/extending probe was the same. The skill could be mastered by practicing the art as much as possible and against many different types of shields. It also stated the universal custom of an oath given to the other individual that any information obtained would be kept private at all costs.

Harry naturally took the oath with Tonks and devoted many hours to learning such a useful ability. The fact that learning Legilimency was restricted by the Ministry of Magic did not even cross his thoughts; nothing would keep him from learning magic.

"You know that my N.E.W.T.'s start in a couple of weeks, right?" Tonks continued on during their practice duel.

"Yeah, why? Are you nervous that you'll fail something that's required for the Auror Academy?" Harry asked slightly teasing and wondering where his female Hufflepuff friend was going with this.

"No, that's not it. Once the N.E.W.T.'s have been taken by the seventh years, Hogwarts always organizes a graduation ball in honor of the students that will leave the school. Usually the major job providers are invited as well to mingle with the new graduates, like the Ministry's department heads, a Gringotts representative, someone from St. Mungo's and several Quidditch team managers."

"Uh huh..... And?" He prodded.

"Well, you remember how I told you about those times I dated one of my year mates and they always asked me at some point to change

into their fantasy-girls?" The young Metamorphmagus asked miserably but with a bit ofwas it hope?

"Yesssss....." Harry hissed out forcefully.

He had become a bit protective of Tonks when she told him about that. The seventh year Hufflepuff was wary of male attention ever since because of it and became a bit of a recluse in her dorm since she didn't fawn all over the handsome boys like her dorm mates did. A few of the boys she went out with in the past inexplicably landed in the hospital wing after that before the Metamorphmagus found out about it and quickly put a stop to it. She was touched by his thoughtfulness but didn't want Harry to get in trouble because of her.

Tonks continued, not noticing the young boy's vehemence. "Well.... I was hoping that... uhm...." She took a deep breath to conquer her nervousness and resign herself to the answer she was already expecting. "That-you-would-come-to-the-ball-with-me?" She finished quickly in one drawn-out word with a sheepish and depressed look on her face.

By now they had both paused in the duel and it took Harry a few seconds to comprehend what his dueling partner had just asked of him. "Excuse me?" He asked unbelievably.

"Uhm.....You see, I don't really want to go with someone from my own year. They are all either complete jerks or try to make me change into someone that I'm not." She trailed off and looked down despondently.

Harry approached his oldest female friend and gently moved his hand under her chin, forcing her to raise her head and look him in the eye.

"This means a lot to you, doesn't it?" She nodded. "And it doesn't bother you that you'll be going with a first-year? Wouldn't you rather go with someone from one of the upper years, say a fifth year or something?" Tonks shook her head vigorously, making Harry chuckle at the sight of her pink hair swirling around.

"I'd be honored to escort you to your graduation ball, Miss Tonks." Harry stated formally with a small bow and a smile on his face.

Tonks quickly grabbed him in a massive hug and kept muttering small things like 'thank you' and 'can't believe' in his ear, however Harry wasn't finished yet.

"On one condition though." He started, making Tonks stiffen briefly before she moved back to look him in the eye expectantly.

"If I am to escort you to such an important event then I want to do so with the 'real' Nymphadora Tonks." Harry said with a smile, making the seventh year wince at her name and sigh because of what he asked for, before nodding reluctantly.

"If you insist." She spoke softly.

"I do." Harry said in an almost loving tone.

It was an argument that they'd had for many times now. Tonks was a Metamorphmagus, however she almost never retained her original form, something which Harry didn't understand. At first, Tonks had refused to show him what she really looked like. However, because of a bet regarding one of their practice duels, Harry made her show it to him one day and what he saw left him flabbergasted.

The Nymphadora Tonks he knew was by no means an ugly girl. She was obviously well-endowed and had a beautiful heart-shaped face, but there was nothing that made her look out of the ordinary, disregarding her usually pink hair of course.

However her original form was just so much more. The heart-shaped, pretty face was relatively the same, only correcting some minor imperfections that she probably adopted to look more normal. Her hair turned a deep velvet black, even darker than his own, which flowed down to just below her shoulders. Her breasts and butt were both a bit smaller, giving her a regal look and making her, in Harry's eyes at least, even more beautiful.

When he looked at her real form for the first time he thought she was just taking on an appearance that he found the most appealing. He was about to tell her off for thinking so low of him when he noticed the anxious state of the seventeen year old girl. He knew then that this was the way she actually looked since she was obviously nervous about his reaction.

"Why?" He asked suddenly.

Tonks didn't understand what he meant so she responded with "Why what?"

"Why would you change the way you look all the time? You're beautiful..." Harry said and blushed when he realized it.

"I... I don't know. I just feel more comfortable with people not seeing the real me." Tonks spoke softly with tears in her dark grey, but almost black eyes.

Harry could have cursed those assholes that made her change into someone else into oblivion, and he did to a certain degree. For causing someone as energetic as Tonks to cry and say that she doesn't want people to see the real her was unforgivable.

Harry was deep in his thoughts while running around the lake. It was the day after Tonks had asked him to escort her to the ball and he was determined not to mess it up. It was going to take up a lot of his time to prepare for it but it would definitely be worth it.

When he asked Tonks to help him with his Transfiguration practice, he never expected that he would get so much out of it. He was now at least as good at dueling as Tonks was and suspected he was on the verge of achieving his Animagus transformation. Furthermore, whatever subject Tonks had trouble with while studying for her N.E.W.T.'s gave Harry an opportunity to learn about it himself, since he usually helped her with it. It didn't mean that he could perform all those difficult spells, nor could he pass every exam from now until the end of his Hogwarts education, but he was certainly aware of where the troubles for learning the material lay and how to overcome them.

His proficiency in Legilimency was another unexpected, positive aspect of his sessions with Tonks. They usually spent more than an hour of every session practicing Occlumency (for Tonks) and Legilimency (for Harry). Both students had yet to completely get the hang of their respective subjects however they were improving rapidly and well on their way towards mastering them eventually.

Harry had already planned on learning it when he observed what Remus was able to do during his own Occlumency lessons, but he

wasn't expecting to become versed in it until fourth year at least. Even then, he'd anticipated that he would have to learn it during the holidays, so that he could practice on Remus' Occlumency shields.

But now he was so much further. Harry knew that he had surpassed his uncle's skill in Legilimency and saying he was proud of it might be a bit of an understatement. Thinking of what he could do with the attacking mind art brought him to another predicament.

Neville Longbottom.

If his suspicions of Dumbledore were indeed correct, then there had to come some kind of confrontation between Longbottom and Quirrell. The boy was obviously aware that the Philosopher's Stone was hidden on the third-floor corridor. Harry didn't know what kept him from going after it but suspected that the idiot didn't know it was in danger, never mind that it was actually very safe in Harry's possession.

He had considered scanning Longbottom's thoughts with Legilimency to see what he knew of the protections and Professor Quirrell but didn't have the guts to go through with it. Harry knew that he could probably enter the Boy-Who-Lived's mind but he was uncertain if he could do so undetected.

Being found out at this point with his ability in Legilimency was detrimental to say the least. Learning the art was restricted and if that wasn't enough then performing it on a person without permission, never mind a minor, was rewarded with a sentence in Azkaban.

'No,' Harry decided. If he is to determine his true expertise in Legilimency then he would have to try it out on a nobody first. A student that is of no importance whatsoever or, should Harry be caught in the act, wouldn't be believed anyway. It was for the best if he circumvented taking unnecessary risks concerning the Boy-Who-Lived, professed 'savior of the Wizarding world', given his considerable political power.

But that still didn't bring him up to speed with the Longbottom-Quirrell situation. Harry had occasionally kept an eye on them and listened in to conversations but they almost never spoke of it. He did find out that the Cerberus was called 'Fluffy' by Hagrid, something

he found very amusing but was insignificant to him. The eleven year old Ravenclaw had already decided not to intervene if something were to happen, simply because it wasn't his responsibility anyway and the stone was safely tucked away.

I know the scene with Flitwick is similar to 'Knowledge is Power', but I thought it was a rather cool scene.

I reserve the right to change the name of Remus' elf.

I'm not going to post anymore when the next chapter will be, as the last time was totally wrong.....

End of First Year

The next couple of weeks flew by in a flash. Harry had to arrange proper dress robes for the ball, which brought another problem since he had come up with a surprise for Tonks. This event was obviously important to her since it was not only her last evening at the school, but also a night to socialize with her future employer and therefore Harry had decided to make it memorable.

Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, would be present together with the other heads of the Ministry departments. If Tonks did join the Auror Academy, she would be working under Rufus Scrimgeour, who was Head of the Auror Office. However, a good first impression with Amelia Bones, the boss of Scrimgeour, would only prove to help Tonks along the way.

The graduation ball was something that was not often discussed among the younger students of Hogwarts, mainly because it was unusual for a seventh year to go with someone from the lower years, let alone a first-year. It was more common for them to invite a former student or even someone outside of Hogwarts' circle. Harry knew that he would be the youngest one present at the ball so he thought of something that would make the evening for Tonks exceptional.

The seventh year Hufflepuff was still somewhat nervous about her N.E.W.T.'s, so Harry spent several hours everyday quizzing her in each subject with the relevant books open in front of him. It introduced him to the advanced material, making it a useful preparation for his future studies. The young wizard was confident that he could pass his own exams without needing to study for it, simply because he had kept up with the material besides his studying ahead.

Students were revising long into the night all over the castle, preparing for their O.W.L.'s, N.E.W.T.'s and normal end-of-year exams. Harry found it amusing to see the fifth years begging him to question them during their mandatory study sessions on Wednesday evenings. Apparently, it had not gone unnoticed that the young Ravenclaw sometimes questioned a seventh year Hufflepuff while in the library. Harry's prowess in class was well-known among the older years, hence he was often preferred by the O.W.L.-students to verify their grasp on the material. However, at that time, the boy previously spoken of had other things on his mind.

Harry Potter was still working on his Animagus transformation and he could sense every time he tried that he was very close to accomplishing it. The meditation sessions in the Room of Requirement whenever he wasn't needed by Tonks were helping him tremendously and he fully believed that he would transform any day now.

Exams passed in a blur of activity, except for Harry of course who was still unaffected. People were stressing themselves beyond even Harry's comprehension and he was even more astonished to learn that several students ended up in the Hospital wing because of it.

His own exams were a 'walk in the park' as he anticipated and he didn't spend much more than half an hour for every hour-lasting exam. All professors were giving him brilliant smiles when they witnessed his practical examinations but Harry thought he saw McGonagall narrow her eyes a bit at him when he transfigured his mouse into a snuffbox. It might be because his snuffbox had a rather intricate blue inlay of the Ravenclaw crest and was made out of bronze, but he suspected something else. 'Still', he thought to himself. 'Perhaps I shouldn't have read that copy of 'Theories of Transubstantial Transfiguration' in the library'.

The book was a brilliantly written, ancient book on the transfiguration of materials such as glass into bronze, silver and platinum. These feats were considered highly difficult and practically impossible for a first-year to do, so it may not have been such a good idea when he performed it in front of his professor.

Several students, mainly Hermione Granger and his fellow first-year Ravenclaws, were jealous of him because they hardly ever saw him studying in the library, yet he still managed everything flawlessly. Harry couldn't care less about that, but he did practice more vigilance on making his way to the Room of Requirement. He didn't think the students had the time to follow him around during such a busy period but he was cautious nevertheless.

Whenever he reached the room safely, he would spend the time meditating for his Animagus transformation. Hours and hours were spent on the last step of his project and Harry could barely stay still long enough for it simply out of anticipation. One day, the first-year

Ravenclaw finally managed it after many hours of thinking about the jaguar....

Harry was sitting in the lotus position with his eyes closed in the Room of Requirement, bringing out his most animalistic urges to the front of his mind. The room was currently transformed in a piece of dense tropical rainforest, complete with the moist air, smells and animal sounds present. In the background, an eerie orange glow was seen in the air, the telltale sign of dusk approaching.

He could feel the animal stirring inside his mind, but that was not uncommon during these meditation sessions. Harry's thoughts were of nothing other than the black feline. The strength of its four legs, the viciousness of its bite, the black fur and most of all, the incredible power that this animal possessed.

Harry felt himself changing, slowly at first but it rapidly sped up. He could sense that his arms and legs were now transformed into paws, a feeling he had experienced many times before but always with the help of his wand. He was aware of a tail forming from his behind, his torso became abruptly covered with the beautiful black fur before he underwent the transformation completely.

He sensed the animal coming to the front inside his mind when he suddenly didn't feel it anymore. The animal and he were now the same, they were one being. He instantly opened his eyes and saw the rainforest around him from a lower height and with even better eyesight than before.

The new-found Animagus started to move forward and wobbled a bit. He looked down to his legs and saw indeed the completely black paws where his legs once were. He was curious about what he looked like to say the least when suddenly a mirror appeared in front of him. It seemed that the room still listened to his mental commands, even though he was in his Animagus form.

He looked at himself in the mirror and saw a magnificent black jaguar in the reflection. He moved sideways and inspected himself thoroughly, amazed by his accomplishment. He couldn't wait to show Remus, wondering how his werewolf form would interact with him from now on. He practiced walking around for a bit, getting used to the shorter, but definitively more powerful legs and trying out moving stealthily.

By the time Harry walked back to his dorm, he wasn't an expert yet obviously however he was just too thrilled to care because he finally achieved the Animagus transformation. Something his father also did in secret, but in the period of three years instead of one and only accomplishing it in his fifth year.

The feeling of giddiness and pride within Harry Potter lasted for three days and several other inhabitants of the castle couldn't help but wonder why.

Finally Saturday, the afternoon before the ball took place, had arrived and Harry was a nervous wreck. He had never gone to such a special event before, let alone one where the other attendants were at least six years older than him.

The first-year had spent the previous week rounding up the last of his exams and working on walking around in his Animagus form. His older Hufflepuff friend had been way too busy with her N.E.W.T.'s to have the time to blow off some steam with one of their practice duels, so Harry had spent his excess energy in the Room of Requirement. It actually became a bit boring to practice firing hexes, jinxes and curses against dummies without the bubbly Hufflepuff around.

Harry had prepared himself the day before the ball, even going so far as to test his surprise for Tonks and thus making sure that nothing would go wrong beforehand. He just hoped that she liked the gift he arranged for her to receive right about now.

Meanwhile, up in the Hufflepuff seventh year female dorm room...

"Tonks? Are you in here?" Susan Bones asked as she stuck her head inside the door.

"I'm in the shower!" The first-year heard someone yell from the bathroom.

Looking around the dorm room, the redhead noticed the other seventh years that were getting ready for their graduation ball tonight. The event was not well-known among the younger years. However her aunt, Amelia Bones who was Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, was attending as well in her position as possible future employer.

"Oh.... Harry Potter asked me to deliver something for you." She shouted in the direction of the bathroom door, while laying the wrapped-up, rectangular parcel on the empty bed.

"I'll be out in a minute! Ouch, damn it!" Susan heard Tonks shout in reply before she left the dorm room, chuckling quietly on account of the Metamorphmagus' renowned clumsiness.

Ten minutes later...

"What do you think it is?" Someone asked softly.

Nymphadora Tonks was sitting on her bed surrounded by her dorm mates; all staring at the beautifully wrapped package and wondering what Harry Potter might have gotten her.

"I have no idea." Tonks replied pensively.

"Well, go on then. Open it! Otherwise you'll never find out." One of her girlfriends since her first-year exclaimed.

"Okay....." Tonks said quickly, suddenly shaken out of her reverie.

She tore through the wrappings enthusiastically, eager to discover exactly what Harry had given her.

The gift revealed to be a black, rectangular box that was easily recognized by the female spectators as a jewelry box from the jeweler in Diagon Alley. There was a small, handwritten note on top of the package, making more than one of the other girls sigh at the thoughtfulness it represented. The Metamorphmagus reverently picked up the note and read it out loud to her friends.

A beautiful woman like you deserves something such as this for her graduation ball.

Wear it tonight.

HP

Tonks had tears of happiness in her eyes from the acceptance that the letter conveyed. She had been unsure whether she made the

right choice by asking Harry to the ball, mainly because of the looks she would be receiving but also because of his age. He was still so young, likely too young for him to realize the significance of such an event on a woman such as herself. However her doubts had now been washed away by one simple note.

She put the small letter aside and opened the box with shaking hands, almost afraid of what was in it.

When the lid no longer concealed the contents of the box from the witches present in the room, Tonks heard the combined gasps of all her dorm mates. She hardly paid it any attention though, for within the box lay a beautiful silver necklace with a deep-blue diamond pendant in the form of a tear.

"I can't believe it." The Metamorphmagus spoke to herself. "How could he know?"

She was referring to the color of her dress for tonight that currently hung to front of her wardrobe. The deep blue color of it was resembled in the brilliant diamond before her. The evening dress was a gift from her mother that she had seen earlier this year in a Muggle designer store. Her mother had it delivered to Madam Malkin's for all the standard seamstress charms before she'd sent it up to Hogwarts just two weeks prior. Therefore it was practically impossible for the first-year Ravenclaw to know about.

Shaking herself from her musings, Nymphadora Tonks continued her preparations for the ball which was only a few hours away. Her mind however kept returning to a boy and his thoughtful gift that remained on display on the bed for now, receiving envious glances from her dorm mates every now and then.

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"Tonks? Your escort for tonight is waiting for you outside the common room." Someone shouted up the stairs towards the dorms.

"Coming!" Nymphadora Tonks shouted back. She briefly thought she heard giggling from the person that called but dismissed the thought without more ado.

She was ready for a while now but was simply too nervous to go downstairs. This was one of the only times that she was going to show herself to people as the real Nymphadora Tonks. Adding the fact that she was wearing heels under her evening dress made her almost afraid to move.

In the end, the anticipation of Harry's reaction to her appearance made her choose to go confront her date for the evening.

The walk down the stairs was difficult but, to her surprise, still manageable with the movement-impairing dress and heels. It seemed that by retaining her original form, her sense of equilibrium was better than normal, which was a very welcome revelation to say the least.

Tonks smoothed her dress and took a deep breath to calm herself as she stood in front of the entrance/exit of the Hufflepuff common room. She once again wondered how Harry Potter knew the location of the entrance to their common room without her ever telling him but pushed the thought away shortly afterwards. This wasn't the time for questioning such things. She pushed open the doorway and walked out looking for Harry until her eyes upon him.

'Him' however wasn't Harry. The boy, no, the man she was looking appreciatively at was roughly her age, very well-dressed and the definition of tall, dark and handsome. 'He seems somewhat familiar', was the thought running through Tonks' head.

Then she noticed the memorable eyes. Familiar green eyes stared back at her with a very complimentary gaze and even a bit of shock and disbelief. She didn't want to consider it at first, but still posed the question.

"Harry?" Tonks asked weakly.

The 'Harry' guy nodded numbly, still staring at her looking completely dazed.

'How?' The now blushing girl blurted out, realizing she'd just been positively ogling a first-year. 'Because that's what he was, right?'

The boy visibly shook himself out of his amazement and answered with his standard reply to such questions.

"Magic, Tonks. Magic. And I have to say, you look absolutely incredible this evening." 'Harry' noted, looking admiringly up and down her blue dress, briefly lingering on her bare shoulders, her new necklace and a hint of cleavage.

Tonks blushed under his praise while she ducked her head and stammered out a soft "thank you" in reply. It was an alien concept for her to be able to appreciate such a stare and compliment from someone her own age. However considering this was Harry Potter, a first-year Ravenclaw despite his current appearance and pretty much her only worthy male friend, the Metamorphmagus simply glowed with happiness.

"Shall we, milady?" Harry asked her, causing her to snap her head up and see him holding out his arm, ready to escort her to the Great Hall.

"We shall, good sir." She replied with a giggle.

As they were walking slowly down the stairs, a comfortable silence came over them. Harry and Tonks were both sneaking looks towards to their companion, the former still stunned by the unexpected beauty of his date and the latter simply astonished by the change in Harry's age, height and general appearance. Whenever they caught the other looking in their direction, they would blush and quickly turn away, somehow becoming shy all of a sudden after months of friendship.

By the time they arrived in the Entrance Hall, the line of students with their dates was nearly gone. Most had simply joined the queue, ready to enter the Great Hall while a few had remained off to the side waiting for their friends, dates or just to watch everybody else. Harry and Tonks joined the remaining few couples in the line, ready to be announced to the hall filled with guests and couples that had already entered earlier. Professor McGonagall, who stood at the entrance to the Great Hall, announced every couple by graduate student and their date as an introduction to the others.

While waiting in the queue, Harry was astounded to see what the Great Hall looked like for the occasion.

It was formally decorated in a ballroom type of style. Large silver curtains hung on parts of the walls to cover the ancient stones of the castle and the ceiling enchantment was temporarily deactivated to provide a beautiful setting with crystal chandeliers. The house and staff tables were removed and ten round dining tables were distributed evenly around the hall. Each table accommodated about fifteen people and the seating appeared to be assigned by Professor McGonagall. The podium at the front where usually the staff table stood was now occupied by a single decorated lectern with the Hogwarts crest on it. You could see several musical instruments in the back of the stage, obviously for later on in the evening when the dance started.

Before tonight, Harry had estimated that there would be around sixty to eighty people in attendance. His approximation was based on the number of Hogwarts graduate students, of which there were around fifty, together with their dates, taking into account that some would go together while others would bring outside guests, plus the Hogwarts staff and some invitees.

However it seemed that his estimation was completely off. There were seats provided for at least a hundred if not one hundred-and-fifty within the hall. It seemed a lot more people were invited to this event than he had originally expected.

"Excuse me young man, may I know your name?"

Harry broke off his inspection and musings about the Great Hall as he heard Tonks giggle quietly to the side of him when he turned to see his Transfiguration professor who addressed him.

"I'm shocked professor. Shocked and appalled that you don't remember me anymore. We haven't even gone home for the summer and you've already started to forget the names of your students." Harry replied with a fake appalled look on his face.

His answer had thrown McGonagall for a loop and she seemed to focus on him for a second with narrowed eyes. Suddenly the recognition came over her and shock followed shortly after.

"Mr. Potter?" Harry simply nodded in reply.

"I thank you professor for finally having the decency to remember me." Harry said with a wide grin on his face.

"Yes, well....." She looked him up and down and nodded approvingly to his attire. "I don't think you can blame me considering your transformation for the evening." Suddenly she snapped her head back up and met his eyes.

"It is just for this evening, right?" She demanded of him with her signature stern look.

"Of course, professor. Who do you think I am?" He turned to Tonks, who still had trouble keeping in her laughter and gave a small grin. "I would never do something that stupid...." Harry trailed off when he saw the skeptical look on McGonagall's face.

"Very well, come up to the front. I'm about to announce you." The professor spoke with a huff before she turned towards his date. "You look very lovely this evening, Ms. Tonks."

The young Metamorphmagus simply nodded her head in appreciation of the compliment, since she still didn't trust herself to speak. The mirth was fully visible in her eyes though as Harry simply had to smile again when he noticed it.

McGonagall turned to the hall and Harry heard her cast a sonorous charm on herself, presumably similar to the earlier announcements.

"MAY I PRESENT: Hufflepuff graduate student, Miss Nymphadora Tonks and her date for the evening, Lord Harry Potter."

Harry snapped his head towards his Transfiguration professor for the use of his title while the people in the Great Hall applauded politely for them. McGonagall simply nodded in acknowledgement of her use of the young lord's title and pointed them to their seats. As Harry escorted Tonks to their places, he saw several of the guests look at him with interest while some of the students seemed to whisper amongst themselves about their appearances and his attendance. The young Ravenclaw exaggeratedly rolled his eyes towards his date which caused the Metamorphmagus to laugh out loud.

When the last couple was announced and seated, the crowd quieted down as Dumbledore made his way up to the stage and to the lectern.

"Welcome! Welcome all to tonight's festivities!" He announced loudly with a smile on his face.

"As headmaster, it is my honor and privilege to introduce our guests to Hogwarts' graduating class of 1992!" The entire crowd applauded loudly in response and Dumbledore kept motioning for quiet to get them to calm down again.

"In just a few moments, dinner shall be served after which the tables will be set aside and the dance will start. Many of our guests this evening are hoping for a chance to have a word with the latest group of Hogwarts graduates, therefore I ask you all to mingle over the course of the evening....." Dumbledore trailed off.

He started to speak again though after a moment of silence.

"However first and foremost, I hope you all have an enjoyable evening and wish you the best in your further careers. Good luck!" The headmaster gave a small bow towards the audience when all students gave a standing ovation for themselves.

Dinner went by without problems and it eased Harry's nerves for the most part to see that Tonks was having a good time. The food that the house-elves served was really good and Harry immediately noticed, when looking for his regular servings, that there were various new things that he hadn't seen before, either at Hogwarts, or at home. It seemed that the parting feast was intended as a reminder to the luxuries that Hogwarts provided over the years.

Some Hufflepuff students of Tonks' year that were seated at the same table commented on her choice of date with a first-year however none were unpleasant about it. Several male and female students around the table were frequently staring at them though, probably because of Tonks' 'irregular but normal' appearance and Harry being 'a bit' older.

With their stomachs filled and their hunger sated, students and professors sat back in their chairs for a moment to let the food settle down. After a while, when even Harry noticed the headmaster

simply didn't seem to get up, Professor McGonagall walked up to the stage.

"Now that we have all eaten our fair share, I'd like to present the band for tonight; please welcome the witches of 'SPELLBOUND'!"

As soon as McGonagall finished her announcement, the hall filled with students once again erupted in applause as a group of five dolled-up witches came up to the stage. Harry politely clapped along, having heard of the band through the Wizarding Wireless Network but he wasn't really a fan. He preferred 'normal', that is to say 'Muggle', music.

"Would all graduate students and their dates please come up to the front to 'open' the dance floor?" McGonagall requested and everyone proceeded to slowly make their way onto the hardwood floor, escorting their dates on their arms. Harry turned to his date and held out his hand, palm faced upwards. "Milady, will you allow me the honor of this dance?"

Tonks seemed to find his antics rather amusing since she snorted quietly and accepted his hand by placing hers in it. They stood up together as one and moved with the others towards the center of the Hall while holding each others hands. Harry turned his head back to see that the tables were rearranged by magic to provide a more comfortable setting for socializing, including a number of standing tables that had appeared out of nowhere.

"Uhm..... Harry?" Tonks whispered.

"Yes, Tonks?" Harry replied.

"Do you even know how to dance?" She asked doubtfully.

"You asked me to this ball almost three weeks ago and you are just now considering the fact that I might not even know how to dance?" Harry answered with a question of his own, his tone filled with incredulity.

"So you do, right? Know how to dance, that is." Tonks repeated.

"Yes Nymphadora, your date for the graduation ball has been taught how to dance. Satisfied? I can't believe you just thought of this now....." Harry trailed off.

"It's just.... I asked you to come with me for support and to avoid being asked by someone to turn into the object of their fantasy. Bunch of hormonal little assholes." The seventh year Hufflepuff hissed out.

That set off Harry's turn to snort and the people nearby gave him suspicious looks as a result of it. It seemed they'd either overheard Tonks' comment or it just couldn't get any more obvious that they were supposed to be quiet and serious, not to mention a bit nervous.

Harry smiled at that last thought.

The couples all assumed their correct positions on the dance floor and the band followed quickly by ticking off with drumsticks after which they started playing a waltz.

During the first steps of the dance, the first-year Ravenclaw had fun enjoying the wide-eyed look of his dance partner when she noticed that he was an experienced dancer. He twirled the Metamorphmagus around the floor, leading her expertly around the other couples while being a bit astonished at the relative ease in balance she seemed to experience. Tonks' clumsiness was almost legendary in Hogwarts and, though he would never admit it out loud, Harry had been a bit apprehensive about this part of the evening. However it seemed his concern was unfounded, as the girl clearly had no such issues while on the dance floor.

Many students separated quickly and walked back to the tables when the song ended, presumably to associate with the 'important individuals'. Harry had to prevent Tonks from immediately walking straight up to Amelia Bones, because several of the guests seemed quite eager to dance, including the director of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Her reaction to being stopped though was quite telling.

"Why did you stop me from going over there? I have to talk to her." The Metamorphmagus hissed out as she turned back to her dance partner.

"Not yet you don't. If you go right away you'll just seem like an overeager puppy. And even then..... It won't be 'first-come, first-served'. You will still have to get in the Auror Academy on your talent and abilities." Harry explained patiently.

"Besides, it looks like she's heading over here anyway to enjoy a dance herself." He said as he discreetly pointed her out in the group headed for the dance floor.

Tonks looked briefly over her shoulder to watch where Harry was indicating and turned back again just as quickly. She seemed to take a deep breath to calm herself and nodded hesitantly.

"Okay, you're right. I just.... I'm nervous as hell and I really don't want to mess this up. This entire evening is for providing us with the opportunity to introduce ourselves to those people who will be making life-changing decisions about us." The Hufflepuff seventh year conveyed to the young wizard before her as she assumed the correct position for the next song.

"I know. You've already told me this before, remember?" Harry asked comfortingly. It wouldn't do for Tonks to break down at the moment.

She nodded and held onto him for the dance. "Yeah, I do. And I also remember now why I asked you to come with me. Thank you for this Harry. Now I just need to curry favor with the woman somehow and not bother her and her date..."

"It'll work out, Tonks. Trust me."

Fortunately for him, she didn't notice the glint in his eye when Harry said that.

"Madam Bones?"

"Yes, that's m..... J-J-James? H-How?" The posing woman started to reply with a suffering sigh but when she looked at the couple who had bothered her, the words almost got stuck in her throat.

Harry smirked; he'd suspected something like this might happen. "My apologies Director Bones, but my name is Harry Potter, not James. Allow me to introduce my date for the evening, Nymphadora

Tonks." He pushed the star-struck young woman a bit forward, thereby giving her an opportunity to speak for herself. However it seemed she'd temporarily swallowed her tongue, so Harry simply decided to continue. "Ms. Tonks here is planning to enter the Auror Academy and was hoping for a moment of your time. Would that be alright? Or are we interrupting something?" Harry asked in his most polite tone, briefly nodding to the woman's date for the evening as a respectful gesture.

"No, not at all. Please, join me." The Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement gestured towards the seats in front of her while she kept staring at Harry's face.

He must have blushed or given some other sign to the woman's action for she briefly looked away before she explained. "Forgive, Lord Potter. But I was unaware of just how much you resembled your late father. That, combined with the fact that I could have sworn you were only eleven had me startled for a minute and brought up some memories of the past."

Nymphadora Tonks, who still hadn't spoken but had at least sat down at the table, whirled her face towards her date. 'He must have known', she thought briefly and sure enough, a small grin currently was visible on his face.

"So I've been told before, ma'am. And you are correct in your recollection of my age. I am currently eleven years old, however because of Ms. Tonks' most generous offer of inviting me this evening I decided to adjust a bit for the evening." Harry said with a warm smile towards the Metamorphmagus.

"A bit indeed," the formidable witch murmured as she kept looking at him, before she continued at a normal volume. "I must say, it is a creative application of the Aging Potion," she turned to young woman before her, "which brings us to you, Ms. Tonks."

The Hufflepuff graduate visibly straightened when she noticed the attention was on her. 'This was it', she thought. 'Now is my chance to make a good impression.'

Later that evening, as Harry and Tonks were dancing to the traditional last song of the ball, they discussed their talks with the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

"So, what do you think of her? Is she everything you've ever dreamed of? Your role model for the rest of your career?" Harry asked jokingly as he gently swayed his date to the comfortable music.

"Yes," the Hufflepuff sighed in his arms. "She has accomplished so much in her life. Look at the way people took notice of her this evening, the way they moved aside for her. She's practically the most powerful witch in Britain and she was still so nice to me."

"It sounds like you have a crush," Harry teased.

Tonks tensed a bit but couldn't maintain the posture for long; she was just too comfortable in his arms with the soft music in the background.

"It's almost like I do. She's the example of what I want to work towards to become later on in life. If anything, meeting her has only made me more determined to become the best Auror I can be." She spoke passionately.

"And you will. I have every confidence you will make an excellent Auror." Harry whispered in her ear.

"Thank you." Tonks said softly as she lifted her head from his shoulder and looked him in the eye. The young Ravenclaw saw a slight hesitation clearly visible in her eyes but had no idea what to make of it besides it being some disbelief, though it didn't look like that.

"And besides," Harry said casually, as if commenting on the weather. "Madam Bones spoke very favorable about your devotion to become an Auror during our dance. She mentioned something about your determination and enthusiasm being your most promising skills of them all. Which, concerning you're a Metamorphmagus and all, is a pretty big compliment coming from her."

The seventh year Hufflepuff girl could only stare at him silently, too stunned to her core by the words of praise she'd unknowingly received from the posing woman. A woman with who she'd spoken with for the first time in her life only a few moments before. Tonks barely even noticed that they had stopped dancing and that

everyone else, including Harry who was no more than three feet away, was giving a round of applause for the performance of the band. She completely missed the conclusion of the ball, where Professor McGonagall thanked the guests for coming and ordered the students to quietly return to their common rooms.

"Are you ready to retire, milady?"

The Metamorphmagus snapped out of her shock when she heard herself addressed as 'milady'. When her eyes had fully focused once again she saw her date for the evening, Harry Potter; currently looking like he was eighteen, standing in front of her with his hand outstretched as a gesture and a handsome boyish grin on his face.

"Oh, shut up," Tonks replied with a smile and took his hand in her own. She looked away briefly to try and conceal the blush that crept up her cheeks however after hearing him chuckle a mere moment later; she realized that she failed the attempt to hide it.

Their trip down to the Hufflepuff common room occurred in a comfortable silence. One was still going over the evening in her mind, a bit of disbelief coloring the fact that everything went so successful. The other was simply satisfied with the entire event and happily escorting his date to her 'chambers' simply because of a job well done, if he did say so to himself.

"What else did she say?" The young woman walking beside him asked suddenly.

"Hmm, what was that?" Harry nonchalantly replied in return, as if he was disturbed out of very deep thoughts.

"Don't give me that," Tonks retorted. "You know perfectly well what I'm talking about. You said Madam Bones complimented me about my attitude towards becoming an Auror, now what else did she 'happen to mention'?" She asked, making the quotation marks with her hands as she continued walking.

Harry snickered. He had come to realize over time that Tonks had the habit to snap at whoever irritated her whenever she was nervous about something which, concerning the past few weeks were filled with apprehension for the past few hours, was quite a lot. Seeing the

impatient look aimed towards him from his date, he quickly broke out of his internal musings and answered the question.

"Not much more about you, per se," he started. "We spoke a bit about my father, my life and who I grew up with since it seems that most pureblood children meet each other at formal occasions and she hadn't ever seen me before. But she was more interested in Hogwarts life in general....."

"How do you mean?" Tonks asked curiously.

"Well, she was of the opinion that the latest Auror trainees weren't really up for the training since their education was, according to her in any case, lacking to say the least. Potions, Defense Against the Dark Arts and Charms were subjects that had declined dramatically and many of the recruits had to be additionally instructed in those branches before they could graduate from the Auror Academy."

"But what about their N.E.W.T.'s? To enter the academy you need at least an 'Exceeds Expectations' in Charms, Transfiguration, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Potions and Herbology." The Hufflepuff graduate student replied worriedly, afraid that her education at Hogwarts was inadequate for her career prospect.

"I know. You've told me so at least twenty times during the past year." Harry explained patiently, trying to reassure the young woman. "However I think that student might raise their scores with things unsuited for the Auror Academy, but still part of the Charms, DADA and Potions curriculum."

"So I might not be behind after all?" The Metamorphmagus asked.

By now they had reached the portrait of the entrance to the Hufflepuff common room and were standing to the side to let the other ball-attendees pass. Harry took a deep breath and thought of how to assure the witch before him of her aptitude.

"When Madam Bones asked me how the two of us came to be together at the ball, I told her of our deal. I explained that in exchange for you helping me with my 'extracurricular studies' and 'studying ahead', that I would let you practice your 'Auror skills' on me. I vaguely mentioned that we had some practice duels, target practice, Occlumency instruction, etcetera."

"She was more amused than curious about the practice duels and target practice, but did commend you on starting ahead in Occlumency. When she asked about my 'studies ahead' I merely told her that you'd taught me some advanced spells like the Stunning Spell and the Disarming Charm. She was impressed because she said it took a measure of proficiency in defensive and offensive spells to be able to teach them to others, let alone a first-year. It was probably then that she realized you were really serious about becoming an Auror and not some flunky without an original idea of what to do later on in life. I didn't know how much you'd have preferably kept secret so I stayed a bit indefinite about what exactly you've taught me." Harry babbled on, getting a bit nervous about comforting the witch before him.

He suddenly found himself wrapped up in a hug from the voluptuous Metamorphmagus and was a bit bewildered for the reason why.

In the end, when after ten seconds she still hadn't let go of him, Harry simply hugged her in return and rubbed her back reassuringly. He whispered soothing nothings in her ear and hoped that he did the right thing at that time. He thought he heard something like, "If only you were a few years older", but wasn't completely sure about it.

The moment was ruined however when he chose to reply to her statement that he probably wasn't supposed to hear.

"I don't know about you Tonks. But I'm certainly old enough to be appreciative of the things I'm feeling up against my chest right now."

The hug was broken an instant later and Harry had to struggle hard to keep the grin off his face when he saw the blush on his date's face. He must have failed tremendously since Tonks smacked him hard on his shoulder before crossing her arms and looking angry at him.

The look softened when she saw that he was repentant while massaging out the pain from his shoulder. She took the hand in both of hers and looked him in the eye for a minute before speaking.

"Thank you for everything, Harry.... They are permitting us to leave tomorrow but we're also allowed to stay for the next week and go

home with the train so it's not like we won't see each other again. At least before I leave, I mean....

"But this feels like we're parting ways and I just want to show you that I'm grateful for everything you've done for me. I don't know if I could've done it without you and I'm glad that I didn't have to..... So thanks."

And with that, she gave him a drawn out kiss on the cheek that was filled with emotion, lingering with her full lips against his jaw line for a moment before moving away. Harry stopped her though when she turned to enter her common room.

"This isn't goodbye, Tonks. We'll see each other again, trust me." Harry said, holding her hands and staring into her eyes.

"I do." She said with conviction.

"Good. Because we will...." He said and trailed off while walking away, starting the path to Ravenclaw tower. Before the portrait closed off however, he made one parting remark which Tonks was sure to have heard.

"Maybe next time, I will be 'a few years older'."

I'm continuing the story, my apologies for being on hiatus for so long.

As you might realize, this chapter was a bit of a difficult piece to write, mostly drawn out too long and took a long time to correct it a bit. I could use some constructive criticism on this chapter.....

End of first year, part 2

It has been a day since the ball and Harry couldn't get it out of his head. It was Monday, but lessons were simply boring since most the end of year exams had already taken place. The first years had taken them all by now and only some of the upper years still had to do a few core subjects, due to the number of students taking part of those classes. The year officially ended on Friday, with the students leaving by train the Saturday after that, but Harry was feeling troubled at the moment and could hardly wait to get back to the inn.

He'd been attracted to Tonks before, which wasn't hard considering the way she looked, but never like this. He was barely out of his girls-are-icky stage, despite growing up with Remus' stories about the 'conquests' of the Marauders. However the mixture of her insecurity combined with her talent, the aloofness towards those she called 'hormonal little assholes', her determination to become an Auror and of course her beauty enticed him like no other. However the fact that she was in fact six years older than him made it just impossible.

The day before yesterday, both of them were roughly of the same height, the same age, dressed up and just...compatible. If Harry wasn't mistaken, he was sure that Tonks was as attracted to him the same way that he was attracted to her. She looked absolutely incredible last night, though she was still herself. Definitely not like those women who wore a layer of make-up on their face that thicker than the diameter of his wand.

But the reality of things just didn't match up. He was eleven, she was eighteen...

Sure when they were both thirty years older, it wouldn't matter anymore. But when he was eighteen, he would never even bear to think of dating an eleven year old girl, let alone be friends with her.

There was just nothing to do about it. He knew that he should put it out of his mind, think about other stuff and continue on like normal. He decided to write a letter to his werewolf uncle concerning the oncoming summer as a distraction.

Moony,

How are you? Harry briefly thought of crossing out that line but chose to ignore it and wrote on. I realize that because of that first sentence there are alarm bells going off in your head, wondering what made me ask about that instead of starting with the reason for my letter; however I don't wish to talk about it. The graduation ball went perfectly well, so there's nothing to talk about. However once again, thank you for having my dress robes adjusted to the different measurements; I believe that Tonks appreciated it.

Now, I'm writing with regards to the coming summer. I am aware that you own a business now and will probably have trouble going on vacation but as your employer, I'm ordering you to take a trip out of the country. I'm sure a few of the trustworthy regulars or one of your 'lone wolf' friends will be able to watch the inn while you're out. I'll simply ask Blinky to keep an eye on them which will make the place run smoothly enough (smirk).

Harry chuckled briefly when he wrote down the smirk. The eager young elf had quickly become a vital part of their make-shift family and was very protective of everything important to Harry, including Remus and the inn. Because of their loving attitude to Blinky, whenever the elf was asked to do something for her master, she would do it to the extreme and with an almost fanatic enthusiasm. The last time he and his uncle had a laugh at her expense was when Harry wrote her a letter asking for some of her special pastries and a few bagels to snack on during the second semester at Hogwarts. Since personal elves were not allowed to serve students at the school, she had sent him back a basket full of them with Hedwig the next day.

However Harry found out that Blinky had shown up the day after that in the school's kitchens demanding to know why the Hogwarts elves weren't taking proper care of her master. When Remus heard, he delicately told her that the elves of the school were much too busy to look after a student's personal needs. His uncle had to assure the female elf later on though that her master was fed properly and didn't need a basket filled with food every week.

Harry shook off the fond thoughts of his elf and continued with the letter, if only to see whether there was something interesting that he could find to do afterwards. He had simply planned on taking a walk through the castle when he'd send it off from the Owlery.

About the trip out of the country.... Not that our previous trips around the countryside weren't enjoyable, but this year I want to see something of the world. Starting Hogwarts has made me curious about the continent and their ways of education so I've begun reading up on France. That's right, we're going to test my skills in the French language.

Though information on France here in the library at Hogwarts is limited, there are still several parts written that intrigue me. Most notably of them is the 'Rue de Magique' in Paris, or the French counterpart of Diagon Alley if you will, which is renowned for its designer items, though not necessarily limited to articles of clothing. I am also hoping for a visit to their premier school, the 'Beauxbâtons Académie de Magie', located somewhere in the South of France (it's Unplottable), mainly because of the allegedly magnificent view of the palace and its grounds.

Last but definitely not least are the ritual sites of Carnac. Ever since you took me to see Stonehenge, I've been fascinated by the very idea of ley lines and their impact on the magical world. So please, can we go? If we do, I'll leave the planning up to you, since you obviously have to arrange temporary personnel for the inn.

The school year is almost over, and the train will take us back to London next Saturday. Are you coming to pick me up at the station? Or should I ask one of my friends' parents to Side-Along me to the Apparition point of Diagon Alley? If you're not there, I'll just assume that you want me to do the latter and you'll see me turn up at the inn before dinner.

Thanks Moony and until Saturday.

Your loving, adorable not-quite-nephew,

Lord Harry J. Potter

'That should do it', Harry thought as he signed the letter. He would go send it off and then either spend his time in some leisure activity or by more advanced reading.

He'd already fully completed his Animagus form and had spent the entire day before in the Room of Requirement to get used to moving around as a jaguar. While a jaguar is known to be very agile and

graceful seeing that it is an excellent stalk-and-ambush predator, Harry's capability to move that way wasn't something instinctive and had to be learned through practice. The difficulty with that was caused by the lower centre of mass, because of the walking-on-four-feet thing in combination with the added weight. Harry was a healthy eleven year old boy and weighed roughly 90lb but his powerfully muscled jaguar form was almost one and a half times as heavy.

However this kind of setback didn't hold the young Ravenclaw back for very long. He had set himself the goal of accomplishing his Animagus form for this year mostly so he could spend the night of the full moon with his werewolf uncle. Harry was sure that Remus would have a set of tests ready that he would have to pass before he would allow the young boy to keep him company while he was transformed.

For that reason alone, he'd spent at least an hour everyday for the past few weeks practicing in the makeshift jungle of the Room of Requirement. As a result, Harry was almost sure by now that he could pass whatever his uncle might throw at him when he came home.

He was brought back from weighing his options due to Kevin entering the dorm.

"What's up?" Harry asked when he noticed Kevin walking up to him instead of heading for his corner of the dorm.

"The guys are starting up a Gobstones contest in the common room. Everyone in the tower is invited to join, but so far only a few older than first-years have entered. Do you also want to play?" The Muggle-born explained with a hopeful expression.

"The guys?" Harry inquired.

"Anthony, Michael and Terry. Stephen said he would see how many were interested before he made a choice." The boy in front of him explained while looking a bit embarrassed for some reason.

"Sure, I'll join them. I guess it could be fun." Harry said before stretching and getting up from his desk. He tucked away the letter to send off at a later time and gestured for the now smiling Kevin to go ahead of him.

"I didn't know you were buddies with those three by the way." Harry stated, not accusing but more in a curious manner.

"I'm not, really." Kevin quickly replied while he continued walking down the stairs. "But they are always around when you're God-knows-where doing Merlin-knows-what. It's for convenience mostly and they are actually okay to hang out with, sort of."

Harry failed to hide his grin. "You're getting good at those Merlin-sayings. Soon you'll be saying 'Merlin's balls' and 'Sweet Morgana' instead of using the quote 'Great Scott' from 'Back to the Future' all the time. I still don't understand why your parents gave you permission to watch that movie four times over the Christmas holidays but I'm sure they're going to regret it deeply.

"What can I say? It's a good movie." Kevin said nonchalantly.

Harry chose not to reply to that. While he had 'officially' lived in the Muggle world until he went to Hogwarts, by the time he was nine he spent practically every weekend at Potter Manor either flying on the fields, reading, exploring the house and grounds or brewing potions in the designated Potions laboratory down in the basement. The fact that his ancestors had spent the majority of their lives at the manor made Harry feel very comfortable and content whenever he was there.

He still spent most of his time in the Muggle world during that period though, but he usually didn't feel like watching television or other such things. Football, dancing lessons, fencing, his muggle education and reading up on the magical world, were all things he enjoyed immensely, but simply took up most of his time. Between those and leisure time spent at Potter Manor, Harry knew that he missed out on movies like 'Back to the Future'.

"Hey, did you hear about Longbottom and Granger?"

Harry was currently still in the Ravenclaw common room, observing the last remaining players after having lost spectacularly in the first round of the Gobstones contest. He had played the game a few times before in his life, but his inexperience showed when he went against Anthony Goldstein in the first round. He didn't think so, but

he might be a bit of a sore loser because he 'really' didn't like the game at the moment.

Kevin unsurprisingly, considering he was a Muggle-born and thus even more inexperienced than Harry, lost in the first round as well and agreed with Harry that the game was rather dull. Both boys had already decided together that they were going to bring a few decks of cards, Monopoly, Risk and other popular board games next year.

"Yeah, I did. Padma was gossiping about it with her sister when we walked from History towards the Great Hall for lunch. The story has been going all around the school ever since this morning when it happened."

At the moment however, Harry couldn't help but overhear the conversation of the two boys in front of him.

"Hmm. Evidently, that girl has been sorted in the right house after all. She might be a bookworm, but she's not real Ravenclaw material. If you know what I mean...."

'Ah,' Harry thought. 'There is the underlying message.' Many Ravenclaws were holding a grudge ever since Hermione Granger was sorted in to Gryffindor house and scored lots of points in most classes with all of her knowledge. The reason behind it was that intelligence and wisdom were attributes that their house was renowned for, indicating that the girl should have been a 'claw' instead of a 'lion'.

However that wasn't what Harry believed on account of his interactions with the girl and though he didn't really want to draw attention to himself, he had to admit, he was actually rather curious now. Considering what he'd heard so far; something happened this morning between Hermione and Neville Longbottom that corroborated the fact that Hermione Granger was sorted into Gryffindor house and thus, that she belonged there.

"What are you talking about?" Harry interrupted curiously.

Both boys jumped at the sound of his voice. 'It seemed they thought that their conversation was private', Harry thought with a grin. Michael Corner and Terry Boot, two of his dorm mates and thus first-years like him, were standing slightly in front of him and watching

the third member of their trio, Anthony Goldstein play against a second year in one of the last rounds of the game.

"Uhm..." Both boys nervously shifted from side to side. It was no secret that he was friendly with Hermione Granger ever since he 'rescued' her from the Troll on Halloween.

"Spit it out guys, I don't bite you know." Harry said impatiently.

"W-Well....." Michael stammered out before he visibly manned up. "Apparently, Neville Longbottom was discussing something with Ron Weasley during Transfiguration that Hermione Granger took offense to. She accosted them both in the hallways afterwards about it and they were overheard by the other Gryffindors. It seemed that they called her a know-it-all bookworm and said something like that it was no wonder she didn't have any friends. Rumor also has it that the Boy-Who-Lived himself even used the 'M'-word."

"The 'M'-word?" Harry prodded, having a good idea exactly what word the other black-haired boy was referring to but wanting to know for sure.

"Mudblood," Michael whispered, looking around briefly to see if anyone heard him say it.

"I see," Harry replied quietly.

And he did see. Neville Longbottom, the Boy-Who-Lived, was an icon for the Wizarding World, having survived the Killing Curse, saving them all from the Dark Lord 'Voldemort' and being sorted into the house of the brave. Many of the students that are at Hogwarts today grew up listening to stories of his life. For him to use the offensive Muggle-born slur was shocking to say the least, tarnishing his own image in such a way that Harry by himself could never manage to do. He wondered what could have set it off...

"What were they discussing?"

"Huh?" His fellow first-year Ravenclaw intelligently replied.

"What were Longbottom and Weasley talking about during Transfiguration that Hermione took offense to?" Harry repeated, talking like he was asking something of a retard.

"I don't know." Michael answered flushing. "But Parvati did say she overheard something about Professor Snape and some stone. Any ideas what they could have been talking about?" He asked eagerly.

But Harry wasn't listening anymore by the time the question was asked. The gears in his mind were already shifting rapidly about the information his fellow Ravenclaw had provided.

It was obvious that the duo of Weasley and Longbottom had found out that it was the Philosopher's Stone that was hidden on the third floor corridor, but that wasn't really a surprise for Harry. In fact, he suspected it already at the end of February when both of them didn't seem to turn up in the library anymore. But Snape, why would his name come up when discussing the stone? Sure, Weasley and Longbottom were idiots but even they couldn't mistake the subject of Alchemy with Potions, could they?

And then it hit him.

'They didn't know about Quirrel!'

After all, none of them knew about him jinxing the broom when Longbottom flew in the Gryffindor-Slytherin Quidditch match. While Hermione actually did distract the DADA Professor that day, it was Snape's robes that she set fire to when Harry noticed her through his binoculars.

'So they thought it was Snape,' Harry mused. And they must still think that or, at least, Longbottom and Weasley seem to do, otherwise Hermione wouldn't be arguing with them. But then why didn't they do anything? Isn't that what Gryffindors were renowned to be, recklessly brave to a fault?

"Harry?"

"Hmm, what was that?" He brought his attention back to the boy in front of him and recalled that he had said something else after telling him about Snape and the stone earlier.

"I asked if you had any theories on what Granger was arguing about with Longbottom and Weasley...." Michael trailed off.

"Nope," Harry said, though perhaps a bit too cheery for it to be believable. "No theories whatsoever. Sorry mate." He had to work hard to conceal his grin while thinking of the 'Marauder Lesson no.1'.

Harry really didn't have any theory of what they were arguing about. The truth was that he already knew it for certain.....

He did however plan on using the Marauder's Map to keep an eye on Gryffindor's golden boy, since he realized that the confrontation that Dumbledore had staged from the start of the year was bound to happen soon. Harry had already decided that he wasn't going to get involved which would keep his knowledge of the whole situation unknown to everyone else and should exclude him as a suspect when the stone turned up missing in the end.

Tonight was the third evening that Harry spent reading on his bed while occasionally glancing at the Marauder's Map, however something was off. Dumbledore was absent during dinner a few hours ago which was unusual on its own, but he'd also seen Longbottom and Weasley glancing worriedly between themselves and the empty Headmaster's chair at the staff table.

By now, his dorm mates had retreated to their beds and closed their curtains more than a few hours ago and Harry was almost ready to do the same. He finished the chapter on the 'Illegibilus Charm' (turns text unreadable) before preparing to turn off the map when he noticed them.

The dots of 'Neville Longbottom', 'Ronald Weasley' were just exiting the Gryffindor common room and sure enough, headed for the third floor corridor via the main staircase. The surprising part however was the dot of 'Hermione Granger' walking less than ten feet behind them. Harry thought they also seemed to be moving rather slowly, but he simply added that to their caution for trying not to get caught. He looked ahead to see if there was any chance of them being found by someone, either teacher or prefect, but it seemed that the castle halls were vacated completely.

That is, until Harry looked at the room with the Cerberus.

While the Cerberus, as a magical animal itself, didn't show up on the map, there still was a dot clearly visible in that room. Quirinus Quirell was there, going after the stone right now and Longbottom, Weasley

and Granger were going to follow after him. Just then, Quirrell's dot suddenly disappeared from the map, indicating that he went down the trapdoor.

Dumbledore's plot was successful. His pawns went unknowingly along with his plans and Harry was unable to do anything about it, lest he bring unwanted attention to himself.

Speaking of the devil.....

Albus Dumbledore, Order of Merlin 1st class, Grand Sorcerer, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards was simply sitting at his desk in the Headmaster's office according to the Marauder's Map. Harry doubted the man ever left the school in the first place and was, in fact, fully aware of who exactly was in the forbidden corridor at this very moment.

The only Ravenclaw first-year boy that was currently awake sighed deeply and took his time to check the rest of the school to see if anyone else would become involved in this dilemma. He checked the halls, broom closets and empty classrooms for any lingering couples; he briefly looked at each of the professors' private quarters to see if they were where they were supposed to be and finished with the common rooms to spot any other students that were still awake.

Then he froze.

While looking at the Gryffindor common room, his gaze shifted, briefly but automatically, to the first-year boys' dormitory as it had regularly for the last three days. There, he saw something which made the gears in his mind grind to a halt.

His reason for keeping an eye on that dormitory every night was to see if Neville Longbottom and/or Ronald Weasley would go after the stone. Therefore, it was not surprising that Harry could describe, in detail, who slept in each bed every night.

Considering that Ronald Weasley had disappeared off the map only a few minutes ago while in the room with the Cerberus, it was rather odd to see a dot on the spot that was normally occupied by him at night.

However that was not the strangest thing that Harry saw that night..... Because that label belonged to the name mentioned above the dot.

It was Peter Pettigrew.

'What the.....?'

Sorry about that but I just couldn't resist a bit of a cliffhanger at this point. Third part of 'The end of first year' coming up later THIS week.

My reasoning for Harry not noticing Pettigrew earlier is that Ron always carried the rat in his pocket and stuff. At night when asleep, I remember Weasley saying that he let the rat sleep in his bed when he found out that it was Peter all the time.

I know that Gobstones is played with balls and would probably be played in an empty classroom or on the grounds but I needed a way to mention Muggle games and bring up the whole Granger-Longbottom scene.

I edited the last three chapters with the site's editor, as to enter a horizontal ruler line for the different paragraphs since my placed line aren't recognized...

Summer of '92

Harry Potter, first year Ravenclaw student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was dead on his feet. He must have looked like an Inferius to the rest of Hogwarts, so tired was he right now...

It was the day after he spotted Pettigrew on the map in Gryffindor tower and he was walking, more like slouching actually, through the hallways of Hogwarts at that moment. He had barely gotten any sleep yesterday, not having been able to close his eyes for more than a half hour before he had to check the map again to verify what he saw.

When he was sure of his observations, the gears in his mind went into overdrive once more and the young Ravenclaw started the thought-process all over.

'Peter Pettigrew is on the map, therefore he is alive and not a ghost because ghosts are clearly not shown on the map. Peter Pettigrew is alive, therefore Sirius Black did not kill Pettigrew that day ten years ago. Why didn't Peter come out of hiding when Sirius was captured? What has he got to hide?' This line of thought went on for a few minutes ending up in some rather unlikely speculations before Harry shook off the conjecture and went back to facts.

'Peter Pettigrew is in the Gryffindor tower at this very moment. He is alive and not running so he is clearly not worried about being caught. Why is he in the Gryffindor tower in the first place? How did he get there? Why hasn't he been found if he's so in the open?' It took a while before the young boy came to his next conclusion which brought even more questions than answers. 'They were all animagi! Peter must be in his rat-form!... He's exactly on the spot of where Ronald Weasley usually sleeps so he must be either on or hiding under the bed... Why? And why there?'

Unfortunately, Harry couldn't think of anything beyond that. His upbringing, sense of hygiene and general revulsion of rats didn't allow him to understand or even suggest in his mind that someone could keep a rat as a house pet, as was the case with Ronald Weasley. However he was reasonably sure of one thing which was that the map didn't lie. Therefore, he was certain Peter Pettigrew was alive and hiding in the Gryffindor first-year boys' dorm at that very moment.

His mind had briefly entertained the idea that the Weasley twins might have found a way to deceive the map and were trying to prank him this way but Harry dismissed it shortly after. Remus had explained once that the map was somehow connected to the wards of Hogwarts and would be impossible to deceive by anyone other than the Headmaster of the school. This was one of the many reasons that the Marauders never showed the map to anyone else because it could negate one of its main purposes.

Still, a glance at the Gryffindor table the next morning during breakfast confirmed his dismissal of the fleeting suspicion simply because the twins weren't wearing their anticipating faces, not even attempting to conceal it. They had been looking a bit subdued to Harry, which was probably caused by the same reason that kept him awake all day.

It started in the morning when Ronald Weasley was spouting out some exaggerated story about how Neville Longbottom had fought off an evil Dark wizard the night before. Combining that with the fact that the famous Boy-who-lived was absent during breakfast, lunch and all of his classes, made the rumors spread around the school almost faster than the new Nimbus racing broom was able to fly. Harry had trouble separating the embellishments from the real story and vaguely wondered the whole day what had actually happened.

Apparently, Hermione Granger had been lying in wait that night down in the common room because she suspected that Gryffindor's resident idiots might go to the forbidden third floor corridor. They thought that they would go and protect the Philosopher's Stone (Harry had to fake a look of surprise once he heard about the item) from Professor Snape who was, according to them, waiting for Dumbledore to leave the school. Granger, after some arguing, followed them to prove that the stone wasn't in any danger of being stolen because "Professor Snape would never do anything like that."

According to the grapevine, when they arrived at the scene, they found the protections disturbed and went ahead to check it out. From there on out, the story became too unrecognizable for Harry to even consider it being genuine because of his knowledge of the real 'defenses'. He did manage to make out that one; the stone had not been retrieved ('Duh! That's because it's sitting in my trunk.....') due to the last 'protection' having been destroyed by the Dark wizard

which apparently obliterated the stone, and two; Neville Longbottom had been hurt severely enough to have to stay overnight in the Hospital wing.

Harry couldn't help but notice the irony there that by failing to come out of it unharmed, Longbottom managed to come across as even more heroic instead of foolish (to go after an adult wizard in the first place) and incompetent (he got hurt, didn't he?). That, combined with the fact that he miraculously recovered quickly enough before dinner, made the rumors only escalate even further.....

When Harry finally arrived in the Great Hall for the End-of-Term feast, almost everyone else was already seated at their respective tables. Many of the students seemed to be talking in hushed whispers while occasionally glancing towards the Gryffindor table. Harry chose to ignore it and headed for the Ravenclaw table, taking a seat next to Kevin while giving a grateful nod to the Muggle-born for keeping a seat open.

It was impossible to overlook the Slytherin colors of green and silver with which the Hall was currently decorated with. Behind the staff table was even a giant banner showing a serpent in honor of Slytherin House winning the house cup. While looking around, Harry quickly spotted Neville Longbottom at the Gryffindor table, looking a bit pale but otherwise seemingly unharmed. A short glance down the staff table revealed a suspiciously absent chair for an equally absent Professor Quirrell.

Everyone slowly quieted down when Dumbledore rose from his seat and started his end-of-year speech.

"Another year gone!" The headmaster spoke cheerfully. "And starting tomorrow, you will all have the chance once again to empty your minds during the summer." He said with a grandfatherly smile on his face.

"But for now, the house cup needs awarding and the points stand thus: In fourth place, Gryffindor, with seven hundred and seventeen points; in third, Hufflepuff, with seven hundred and forty-one; for Ravenclaw, eight hundred and three points and Slytherin house has eight hundred and sixty-six points!"

Slytherin House burst with applause and many students stood up during the ovation for themselves. A few students at the Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw table clapped politely, including Harry who was happy for Blaise and Daphne even though he couldn't care less about the cup, but the Gryffindors were sulking over their loss. Dumbledore however kept standing and, after the noise quieted down a bit, made shushing motions so that he could continue.

"However," the pause here made Harry roll his eyes about the Headmaster's flair for dramatics. "Recent events have to be taken into account, and therefore I have a few last-minute points to hand out." Another pause, however this one generated complete silence from the crowd.

"First..... To Hermione Granger, I award forty points, for her unwavering trust in the faculty and the cool use of logic in the face of fire."

The young Muggle-born girl received a polite applause while she hid her face in her hands. It seemed she still wasn't fully accepted in her house.

"Second..... To Ronald Weasley, for the best game of chess Hogwarts has seen in a long time, I award him, fifty points." Dumbledore stated.

Harry watched as the youngest Weasley boy seemed to inflate with self-importance while his face still managed to turn the same colour as his hair. Students at the Gryffindor table cheered loudly for the first-year that managed to score so many points with a game.

"And last..... For standing up against evil with outstanding courage, I award Neville Longbottom, sixty points." Harry's mouth fell open in disbelief, figuring it out quickly. "This means, if I'm not mistaken, that we need a change of decorations. Congratulations Gryffindor House!" Dumbledore announced and with a flick of his wand, the banner changed to show a lion and the colors switched to Gryffindor red and gold.

The Gryffindors went wild at their table when they realized they had won the house cup, while most Slytherins were looking at Dumbledore with menacing looks. Harry was tempted to do the same; even though the majority of the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff

tables were enthusiastically applauding the Gryffindors for their win. He thought it was cruel, the way Dumbledore chose to favour his old house and the Boy-who-lived. He shook his head in disappointment, not even slightly caring who took notice of it.

Soon the next day arrived and before long, the students were on their way to London via Hogwarts Express. Harry, Kevin, Blaise, Daphne and Tracey were sitting together in one compartment, either dozing off out of boredom, reading (in Harry's case) or conversing quietly between each other.

Though Kevin was technically Harry's friend while Daphne and Tracey were Blaise' friends, all of them got along with each other just fine. Their interests and backgrounds varied of course, but there was nothing that prevented them from being sort of friends, like would be the case if one or more were pureblood bigots.

Tonks had departed from the school that morning, choosing to apparate back home from the Hogsmeade station instead of riding on a train all day. Harry smiled a goofy smile as he remembered their goodbye on the platform of Hogsmeade station.....

"Harry?" Tonks called out to him.

The first-year Ravenclaw in question turned around and saw a nervous looking young woman standing before him. As soon as he made out just who had addressed him, a happy smile lit up his face.

"Hi Tonks," Harry replied. "I thought you'd left already when I didn't see you at breakfast. Where were you?"

"I wanted to ask Professor Sprout a few last-minute things about Herbology so I packed my things during breakfast. But I'm apparating home from here and I just wanted to say goodbye to you." Tonks said sadly.

"Oh right.... Though it's not like we won't see each other again, right?" The boy asked, not really knowing what to say.

"Off course we will Harry. I'm going to be very busy though with Auror training the next few months, but I'll make sure to come by the inn sometime. Just promise me one thing?" The Metamorphmagus asked emotionally.

"What's that?"

Tonks came closer. "Don't change...." And with that, she kissed Harry softly on the lips.

The young Ravenclaw boy was momentarily stunned at the unexpected gesture and the unfamiliar feeling of a pair of lips touching his own. By the time he recovered, the kiss had ended already and Harry dazedly touched his lips with his fingers. With a questioning look, he turned to the young woman in front of him and said the first thing that came to mind; "Thank you?"

She simply chuckled in reply and gave him one last hug. "You're welcome Harry. Anytime..."

Harry returned the hug with force, savouring the last few seconds of companionship with the older girl in front of him. It wasn't the end of a friendship, but it certainly would be a while before he saw her again.

Thinking of their goodbye made him feel a bit sad as well. He and Tonks had gone through a lot together, both in their friendship and their joint practice of magic. Harry doubted that he would have achieved as much if it wasn't for that run-in on the stairs towards the owlery that day. He probably wouldn't even have completed his Animagus transformation this year, considering the number of hours he had been allowed to practice Human Transfiguration on the Metamorphmagus. All Tonks did those hours was simply sit (or stand) around for him and read books about duelling, usually things that she wanted to practice afterwards.

The young Ravenclaw wondered what her reasoning was behind that kiss. Harry would never admit it out loud but he had definitely fantasized of such a thing happening after the graduation ball.... not while saying goodbye at the Hogsmeade station. It was his first ever kiss, but what did it entail?

Harry shook his head, getting rid of those thoughts. Tonks and he were good friends, nothing more. She was almost seven years older than him and though she was a very beautiful witch, both in her original form and her standard appearance, Harry did not have a crush on her..... 'Not anymore at least,' he thought.

"Back with the living?"

Harry looked up to see Daphne staring at him, obviously expecting a reply of some sort.

"Yeah, sorry about that." He briefly looked down to see his book still lying in his lap and wondered how the girl in front of him knew that he had been lost in his thoughts. His questioning gaze must have been enough, because Daphne answered the unspoken question,

"Your face. You were going through all kind of different emotions plus the fact that your book has been on that same page for the past 25 minutes." The girl said with a soft smile.

"Oh," was all Harry could say to that.

"I suspect we'll be arriving soon, so you might want to wake him up." The Greengrass heiress said with a nod towards Kevin.

Harry looked to his right side and watched as Kevin continued to sleep, undisturbed by the conversations in the compartment. The Muggle-born boy was drooling on his own shoulder, propped up with his head against the window-side of the compartment and looking like he was almost in hibernation.

Harry turned to his friend and decided to do as the girl in front of him suggested, he would soon be home!

"How was your second term at Hogwarts, Mr. Potter?" A voice behind him asked.

Harry didn't have to turn around to know who it was that had addressed him. The deep, accented and cultured voice was easily recognizable but in combination with the fact that the man had approached him soundlessly made the soon-to-be second year Ravenclaw completely certain.

"Jasper!" Harry enthusiastically greeted as he hopped off the bar stool and embraced the now surprised vampire.

It was the evening of the day after Harry had returned from Hogwarts and he had been working on his summer assignments at

the bar to keep Remus company. There were just a few late-night patrons in the room that were either quietly conversing with their associates or simply enjoying a nightcap before they planned to turn in.

As an inn/bar, they didn't have an exact closing time. When things turned down for the night, Remus would simply spell the door in such a way that it kept any new customers out and signalled to the remaining customers that he would soon be retiring. They were free to finish their drink in peace, and might even have refills from his elf, Hugo but usually people cleared out quickly enough after.

Something about 'lacking the proper and comfortable atmosphere'....

His werewolf uncle had once tried to explain that a bartender didn't merely provide the customers with their drinks, but the following hour-and-a-half speech was so boring that he fell asleep after the first fifteen minutes. Harry didn't have the heart to tell the man that he couldn't even remember those fifteen minutes...

"So?" The vampire prompted once he was released from the hug. "How was it?"

"It was alright."

"Alright?" Here the man paused for a moment as if thinking of something. "Not 'totally awesome', not 'a bit disappointing' and not even 'rather tiring'?"

Harry smiled, recognizing his own words thrown back at him. He thought for a moment before coming with an appropriate answer.

"It was... rewarding," he said with a grin.

"Ah, I see."

"So what are you really doing here?" Harry asked, thinking it best to stay away from the topic of his Animagus transformation in such a public place. "I doubt that you came all this way just to ask about my school year."

"While my interest in your education was sincere, you are indeed correct..." Jasper started.

"You see, I actually wanted to speak to you before you left on your trip to France. Remus mentioned your plans when he told me that he was looking for some help with the running of the inn while you two were away. However, the moment I let my wife know you had plans to visit my home country, she insisted on inviting you to dinner at our house one evening to get to know you herself."

"You have a wife?" Harry blurted out in response, surprised that the first vampire he met was married and that he hadn't ever heard of it before.

"I do....." The vampire drawled, clearly amused by Harry's reaction to his revelation.

Now that Harry thought about it, the questions he typically asked of Olivier Jasper Moreau were always about vampires in general. Dietary options, sleeping habits, magic usage, etcetera. Never had any sort of question come to him about a personal life that the vampire before him may, or may not have had. And seeing the amusement practically written on Jasper's face, it was clear to Harry that he was an idiot for not thinking of the possibility sooner.

"Well," Harry said, thinking about the invite and looking at Remus behind the bar who nodded once. "I don't see why not..... I'll be safe though, right?"

"I'm sure Clémence will be able to behave herself on behalf of my friends. Even if you are English...." Jasper trailed off, seemingly commenting the last bit to himself.

Harry nodded in acceptance of that. While Jasper had explained many things about vampires, there were still things about them that the Ravenclaw was weary of.

Although vampires were not exactly the bloodthirsty monsters out of horror stories, their need for blood as sustenance was still quite real. Magical blood, that is the blood from witches, wizards and other magical beings, was according to most vampire guests at the bar the best that they ever had. Naturally, Harry wanted to confirm that he wouldn't be the dinner before he accepted such an invitation.

"Then we'll accept." Harry replied firmly. "I'd love to meet the woman who managed to stay settled with you for over a century or however long you have lived."

"Lovely." All Jasper did in response after that was grin at him, showing more than just a bit of his fangs.

It was two weeks after that visit that Harry and Remus arrived at their hotel room in the centre of Paris. The younger of the two seemed to be bouncing with excitement at being in the city of lights while the older seemed to be slightly ill.

"Why exactly did we have to travel by Muggle means? I would have been perfectly happy with an international Portkey, especially after that nightmare we travelled with just this morning." Remus moaned out.

Harry snickered. He simply couldn't help it. His werewolf uncle had been complaining about their trip across the Channel from the moment they had set foot upon French soil. He still couldn't believe the man had gotten seasick within twenty minutes of their departure from Dover, only to have to suffer through it for another hour. Considering they had just had a two-and-a-half hour train journey behind their backs and Remus still wasn't feeling better, well Harry thought it was all rather funny.

"I'm sure your stomach will have settled before dinnertime," the young boy soothed. "Now, can you please enlarge our suitcases so we can change and go explore? And by the way, did you follow the conversation I had with the receptionist down in the lobby? She asked which of my parents was from France because since I spoke it so fluently, one of them had to be from here." Harry said smiling at his accomplishment.

"Yes, yes, we all heard you repeat it loud enough in the lobby so everyone could hear." Remus replied with a sigh while enlarging their luggage with a wave of his wand. "So today we explore, then tomorrow we start with sightseeing throughout the city and then after Tuesday we visit the magical side of Paris, right?"

"That's what I thought would be best. Hogwarts' library didn't have much information on the subject of France but from what little I did find, the fourteenth of July or 'Quatorze Juillet' is solely a Muggle

celebration. According to the folder on the ferry, next Tuesday which is the 14th will see the streets of Paris filled with activities," the coming second-year Ravenclaw explained.

"Then it's settled."

"Bienvenue, a Rue de Magie!" Harry called out, imitating his uncle from a few years back when he first got to see Diagon Alley. However, comparing the place they had just entered to its English quaint equivalent was almost impossible to do.

Diagon Alley was accessible through the courtyard behind the Leaky Cauldron, a dark and shabby, unimpressive pub that rented rooms, had several private parlour rooms and a large dining room. The English shopping street behind it stretched out for about half a mile before ending in a split between Knockturn Alley and several other side streets. The shops looked rather old-fashioned with mostly wooden shop fronts and their goods on display both within and outside their stores. Overall it looked like a picturesque village from the early 19th century.

Its French counterpart though was much more impressive. The various access points were plain illusionary buildings that hid the entrance to the shopping centre which were warded against Muggles. At first sight alone, the street was wider, livelier and much more colourful. The stores, for they couldn't be labelled as shops, had large window displays with extra lighting to show off their merchandise, price tags on everything and at least several employees running around rather than just one shopkeeper. The place seemed much larger as well, due to the number of retail stores for shoes, high-end fashion, Muggle fashion, lingerie, etc., instead of just one or two general clothing stores.

But it didn't end there.

Remus and Harry had their eyes almost popping out of their sockets from the sheer number of stores. Instead of just one apothecary, there was also a pharmacy (medical potions, bezoars, anti-venoms), a plant store (fresh plants, seedlings, dragon dung fertiliser), a florist (flowers, delivery service), an animal harvesting store (animal parts, animal harvesting service, live animals for harvesting) and more. There was also both a wand store and a wand crafter, several stores related to flying (a large Quidditch store, a broom store), a few

bookstores (second-hand books, general bookstore, rare and antique collectables), jewellery stores and some stores that sold various normal or enchanted items. Along the street were also more than a few cafés/bars/restaurants spread around, such as a coffeehouse, sandwich store, pub, fancy restaurant, you name it.

All-in-all, the French shopping centre made such a good impression on the two that it would become the preferred place to buy their supplies for many years to come.

While Harry and his uncle were exploring the Rue de Magie for their first time, looking every which way to take in the sights and discussing between each other what stores they wanted to check out, another pair of visitors to the commercial street were walking past them.

"Maman, we still have to visit the wandshop for my birthday present," a girl with silvery blond hair said in French.

"And what might we be getting at the wandshop, dear?" The gorgeous woman that was walking next to the girl replied in the same language. If one were listening closely, they would hear the humour in the elder female's voice.

"You already know that I want a wand holster for the duelling course at school this year mother! Plus if we get it now then I can even show it to Jean-Claude at the duelling tournament this Saturday. Papa said he had gotten backstage passes from the Ministry this year and that there was a good chance we might get to meet him." The younger of the two spoke enthusiastically.

"I know Fleur, but we'll go there afterwards if we have the time. First we have to pick up the order for your father and then get you some new robes. The ones you're wearing are still okay but you've outgrown the others in your closet this year." The lady explained patiently.

Remus, with his terrible understanding of the French language, simply couldn't follow the conversation and found it amusing to see the teenage girl stomp her foot like a spoiled little child. It was easy for him to see that the pair was obviously mother and daughter, considering their similar blond hair and beautiful features. The girl, who according to Remus' guess was about fourteen or maybe

fifteen, had an attractiveness like her mother that made the werewolf quickly turn away in shame when he realised that he'd just been ogling a teenage girl. A glance to his side that showed his nephew being entranced by the teenage girl confirmed his deduction that they were at least part Veela.

Slap!

"Huh? What just happened?" Harry asked confusedly. "And whatever I did, did you have to hit me that hard?" He exclaimed while rubbing the back of his head.

"You were staring at that girl like lovesick puppy.... If I hadn't slapped you out of it, you would probably still be on cloud nine about her." Remus explained exasperatedly. "Come on, Romeo. You can ogle teenage girls when you're older."

"Hey! I was not staring! She's just very beautiful, that's all..." Harry trailed off, looking over his shoulder attempting to get another glimpse of the girl while following his uncle.

"I'm sure...." Remus deadpanned. "The fact that she is also part Veela has nothing to do with your sudden enthrallment."

"A Veela? What's that?" The raven haired boy asked.

"Veela are a race of semi-human women that appear to be unnaturally beautiful to others. They have a different kind of magic than our own which doesn't require the use of a wand and they exude an allure that makes men and even some women become mesmerized by them. Like you were just a few seconds ago," Remus told him amusedly.

"So there's nothing you can do about it? I mean, you didn't become all awestruck about them and I'm pretty sure that the woman was the same as the younger girl. Or does that have to do with you being a werewolf?" Harry enquired.

"While I was not as captivated as you were, I assure you I still felt the effects of their charm. I'm not sure whether my being a werewolf has anything to do with it but I know there are some men able to resist it at least to some degree."

"I see." And he did see. There was some characteristic that allowed them to ignore or at least withstand the allure to a degree. Harry didn't know whether it was magical power, some kind of item or even perhaps a genetic trait but it was possible to do. And therefore he reasoned that he could become able to resist it as well. Now, how to approach the other thing he wanted to know.....

"Uh-oh, I know that look. Let me guess, another side-project?" His uncle asked almost hesitantly, like he was afraid of the answer.

"Not exactly, though I wouldn't mind being able to do some extra research about the subject." Harry replied, making Remus sigh in relief.

His nephew was sometimes just too much like his mother and could become almost obsessed with the search for more knowledge about something new. The fact that he, like her, was usually also able to obtain that knowledge in the end made it a bit of a scary trait.

"No, I was thinking of something else... Did you per chance overhear what they were talking about?" The young boy enquired.

"I caught the words 'gift' and 'birthday' together with the name 'Jean-Claude' so I'm thinking the girl was asking her mother about what kind of present to buy for her friend?" Remus suggested questioningly.

Harry shook his head and merely smiled. For a man as studious as his werewolf uncle was, he was just unable to grasp another language, besides Latin. It was a constant source of amusement to the young boy that he was the interpreter during this vacation.

"The 'girl'", Harry emphasized, "was talking about getting a wand holster for her birthday so that she could show it to someone called 'Jean-Claude' at a duelling tournament this weekend."

"Oh....." Remus said, wondering why his nephew was telling him this. "And?"

He obviously couldn't connect the dots that Harry wanted him to.

"I was thinking we could see about getting tickets for the tournament ourselves and go see it this weekend. It would be cool to see a

professional duelling match for the first time." The boy explained, enunciating the first sentence slowly as if he were speaking to a small child.

Remus nodded, thinking of the duelling matches he had seen in his past. "Sure, why not?"

Their exploratory visit to the French shopping centre turned in a different direction as the pair tried to find out where to get a hold of a pair of tickets for the duelling tournament they heard about. They discovered that it was the annual national duelling championship of France and that tickets might be difficult to obtain so shortly before the actual event. It was Remus who came up with a possible answer to their problem.

"Perhaps Jasper would know how to get tickets this late?" He suggested as the two were walking back towards their hotel.

The dinner Harry and Remus had agreed upon beforehand was scheduled for the next day, so they decided to ask the old vampire then. Even though they had no idea on how to get to the Moreau estate, Remus had apparently arranged a meeting place and time with Jasper somewhere at Rue de Magie.

And so, the next evening the pair of them were dressed rather formally and waiting for Jasper to arrive since they were a few minutes early.

"Good evening, gentlemen," the vampire mysteriously greeted them out of nowhere.

Both adult and teenager jumped at the sudden appearance of their host for the night.

"I thought I asked you not to do that again," Harry snapped, trying to bring his heart rate back to normal.

"Yes, you did," the finely dressed man before them concurred. "However we are not in your business anymore. We are in my home country now." The vampire stated rather dramatically.

"Whatever, old man. Let's just get this over with." Harry said while walking away a bit, chagrined by the fact that he still hadn't gotten used to the vampire's antics.

"Sorry about him, but you know how he gets when he gets spooked about something." Remus apologized to their soon-to-be host.

"No worries. But that will mean that he stays like that for a while. There's no doubt in my mind that Clémence will try to do the same thing...." Jasper trailed off. "She will most likely succeed too."

"Harry will be prepared, trust me. You told me he took you by surprise the first time you met him. I'm sure he'll do the same to your wife. He's like that." Remus mentioned while the vampire nodded at that in agreement. "Now if you don't mind, how are we travelling to your house tonight?"

The man in front of him smiled rather sinisterly before he vanished in black smoke all of a sudden. Sooner than Remus could react, the vampire appeared behind the werewolf and laid a hand on his shoulder, alerting him to his presence. "Like this," Jasper said.

And with that, both disappeared in black smoke before reappearing next to a bewildered and still irritated black-haired teenager. "Come Potter, Clémence is waiting for us," the boy heard.

Once again, they vanished only this time by taking Harry with them and leaving behind nothing but a few late night visitors in the French shopping centre.

"Wh-What was that?" The raven haired boy asked once he was firmly back on his feet.

"That, gentlemen, was one of the many options by which vampires travel." Jasper replied, taking a moment to take in his surroundings, as though he was searching for something.

"Olivier?" A throatily voice called out from above.

Harry turned his head to see who'd spoken and immediately froze. His mouth fell open from astonishment, his cheeks reddened because he suddenly felt very warm and the teenage boy only barely refrained from drooling at the sight above him.

There was a black-haired woman leaning over the balustrade of the indoor balcony. She was wearing a simple silver, silk bathrobe that was loosely tied around her waist. The combination of black hair, her flawless face, the hourglass figure and the hypnotizing dark eyes associated with being a vampire made her look like a goddess. The woman's cleavage showed clearly that she wasn't wearing a bra, which made the vision she presented all the more enticing.

"Ah, I see you've brought dessert with you. Give me a moment and I'll join you, okay dear?" She spoke towards them as she turned around, flashing them her lovely backside and moved back into an upstairs room.

'Gods, even her voice was exquisite,' Harry thought before he realised just what the goddess said.

"And that would be my lovely wife, Clémence Jeanne. Don't mind what she just said, but whatever you do, don't ever call her Jean." Jasper whispered. "Come, and I'll show you around before we head to the dining room. I'm sure by then Clémence will be ready to join us.

Remus nodded and followed their host, even though he did look a little dazed. It seemed Harry wasn't the only one affected by the sight of such a gorgeous woman.

After that they were led around the house, showing that even though they slept during the day and preferred the dark, vampires did appreciate a good view seeing as the house had lots of windows. When Jasper offered them refreshments, Clémence came back and though this time she was properly dressed, she still mesmerized the two guests in her black evening dress.

"Hello boys. Don't you look lovely... I am Clémence Jeanne Moreau, but you can call me Clémence." The woman purred as she offered her hand to Harry.

Harry, though unusually controlled but still a teenager and therefore thoroughly blushing at the sight of such a beautiful woman in front of him, stammered out; "H-H-Harry P-Potter, mademoiselle. Enchanté." With that, the boy briefly kissed the back of her hand in a small bow.

The lady before him let out a musical laugh and she gazed at him fondly. "I can see why my Olivier is so fascinated by you, Harry. Or should I say 'Lord Potter'?"

"Harry is fine, ma'am. May I introduce my former guardian, Remus Lupin?" The boy gestured to his side where Remus stood rather nervously.

"Ah yes, the wolf...." Was all the woman said with a nod to Remus, not moving to allow the same greeting as she did with Harry.

This seemed to set the norm for the rest of the evening. Clémence apparently wanted to know everything there was to know about Harry and barely even acknowledged Remus' presence. The werewolf seemed to take it all in stride and held himself appropriately, not even attempting to intervene in their conversation. The teenager did notice Remus and Jasper trading looks every now and then, seemingly in silent discussion about something he, Harry, did not realise.

Neither Jasper nor Clémence knew of a way to get their hands on tickets, mainly because vampires were not allowed at such an event and the pair simply couldn't be bothered since it held no interest of theirs. They did have a few interesting anecdotes though on some renowned figures of the past. Harry hoped that he stayed friends with these people for a long time, recognizing the vast wealth of experience and memories they had for what it was.....

The real reason for their vacation to France didn't become clear to Remus until Harry brought it up. Though the older man was by no means complaining; between their visits to all the non-magical sights of Paris and of course the palace of Versailles, their amazing experience at the ritual sites of Carnac (you could still feel the wild magic in the air around) and the plan to acquire tickets for a duelling tournament, Remus had enjoyed himself more than he could practically remember.

It was the day after their dinner at the Moreau estate that it all came out.

"Where are we going, exactly?" Remus asked from beside his 'nephew' in the underground or metro as it was called.

"I already told you, we're heading to the stop of Hotel Ville." The younger boy said, smirking at the non-answer.

"Yes, that clears it up completely," the werewolf drawled. "Let me rephrase, what are we going to do there?"

"Fine, spoil my surprise," Harry answered. "We are going to visit Nicolas and Perenelle Flamel."

"The alchemists?" Remus replied, shocked at the mention of two of the most famous people in the magical world. "But no-one knows where they live! There's even a rumour that they live in a flying castle."

"While that may still be correct, though I prefer not to believe in rumours, I have a different theory on where exactly they currently reside." The oncoming second year said, knowing his 'uncle' would be proud of his reasoning.

Remus simply sighed. "Never mind then, I'd rather not know. Knowing our previous record, you'll have some incomprehensible theory that normal reasoning would rule out completely..."

Harry interjected, "and which is usually correct anyway in the end."

"Yes, that. Therefore I'd rather not know."

Harry pouted.

...

"Why exactly are we walking up and down this area with no real direction?" Remus Lupin asked his nephew that he was still obediently following.

"I'm counting Remus, and it has only been like ten minutes so be patient."

"Oh yes, I'm sure it's fascinating to know exactly how many houses are on this street." The man pointed out sarcastically.

"I thought you said you didn't want to know my theory?" Harry asked, throwing an amused look over his shoulder.

"I think I changed my mind....." Remus said uncertainly.

"Very well!" The boy said enthusiastically, as if he'd been waiting for it the entire time.

"We are currently traversing on the intersection of 'Rue de Perenelle' and 'Rue de Nicolas Flamel'. These two streets were named after the couple by Charles VI of France in 1390 as a reward for services to the Government. Rumours circulating at that time proclaim it was for replenishing their coffers with gold created by their (then) recently created Philosopher's Stone during the Hundred Years' War. These were never proven of course because even though the Statute of Secrecy didn't exist back then, openly practicing magic could still earn you a death sentence."

"History shows us that Charles VI went mad sometime in 1392 and tried to undo this act later on, only to find that he couldn't somehow. The Flamels were blamed and the couple faked their death in Muggle France in 1418, right after their house was seized by the government. The library in London had a book mentioning that that house, residing at 51 Rue de Montmorency, currently holds a restaurant therefore making it unlikely for their current residence."

"My 'theory' is that Nicolas and Perenelle were proud of having it named after them both and therefore purchased a residence there in that time. Because when the king tried to rename the street and found out that he couldn't somehow, proves that there was magical interference."

"The reason that we are walking up and down this area is because I believe that they never got rid of that house. Since the stone has been highly sought after for the past six centuries by both good and evil wizards/witches, it is highly likely that their house is thoroughly warded and thus hidden from normal scrutiny. I am simply counting the numbers of the houses to see if there might be an obvious skip in them that might account for a house being hidden by magical means. It seems that we have arrived at our destination."

Remus said nothing; he simply continued to stare at his nephew in open-mouthed astonishment. They had stopped walking during the

explanation and Harry was looking back at his werewolf uncle waiting patiently for the man to gather his wits.

After a few minutes and repeatedly shaking his head, Remus came by and looked at the two houses before him. Sure enough, the house on the left was number 34 and the house on the right was number 38. The houses across the street showed them to have the numbers 33, 35, 37 and 39, giving no explanation for the missing number 36. "Two questions...."

"Yes?" Harry inquired.

"What are we going to do now?" Remus asked. "I mean, we can't simply ring the doorbell (because we can't see the house), neither of us is competent at breaking wards, and I doubt you're willing to stake out the place waiting until one of them comes out."

"However more importantly, why are we here, possibly in front of the house of the Flamels, in the first place?" The werewolf asked loudly, nearly freaking out at their current situation.

"Calm down, Remus." Harry said softly. "The reason why we are here is something that I'd like to talk about with the Flamels. As for your first question...." Here the older male watched as the young boy opened his backpack that probably identified him as a tourist and took out a speakerphone? "I thought long and hard about how to contact them in the first place, knowing that owls would probably be redirected or they wouldn't even reach them at all and thought that this might come in handy." Harry said with a mischievous grin on his face.

"What if they're not home?"

Harry stayed silent, not having thought of that.

"I just know I am going to regret this but go ahead. Even I can't find anything wrong with your reasoning and am curious to see if it pays out." Remus replied dazedly.

"I knew you were going to say that." Harry said smiling in triumph. "Ready?"

Remus nodded simply.

Harry took a deep breath and turned on the speakerphone, preparing to announce himself to the hidden house. 'That may or may not be there', Remus thought to himself.

"I am sure that won't be necessary now, will it?" The two males suddenly heard from behind them on the sidewalk.

Both Remus and Harry jumped in surprise, though only Harry was inwardly cursing himself for still not having rid himself of that particular reaction. The pair of wizards turned around to see a brown-haired, middle-aged man standing there looking faintly amused at their reaction. The younger of the two squinted his eyes a bit, thinking he recognized the man but couldn't remember exactly wherefrom.

"And why would that be, sir?" Harry asked respectfully, inwardly frowning about being interrupted.

"Oh, no reason really." The man commented casually. "However I do believe that it is my attention that you are trying to get in the first place."

"Your attention?" Remus spoke up. "Are you Nicolas Flamel?"

Harry scoffed. This man couldn't possibly be the renowned alchemist.

"Were you expecting anybody else?" The man then turned to Harry. "I must say, your explanation about the location of our home was remarkably well thought out. The only problem I could find with your plan was that it required us to voluntarily come out of our very well protected home. Would you have been a person of questionable intentions I doubt that it would have worked out so well."

"You don't think our intentions are.... questionable, as you say?" The younger of the two asked politely, still questioning whether this man was actually Nicolas Flamel.

"While you two may not exactly be as pure as a unicorn, I sincerely doubt you're here to do us harm. Especially with what is currently in that bag of yours." The man remarked.

Harry's eyes widened. The man before him knew that the Philosopher's Stone was hidden in his backpack that very moment. No one had even known that he had that stone in his possession. As far as he could presume, Dumbledore thought that the stone was destroyed when Quirrell obliterated the mirror, which must have broken the enchantments and with it, the stone if it still would have been there.

But this man before him somehow found out that it wasn't destroyed. That it was actually a mere five feet removed from him. The only person that could know something like that must be its creator, or so Harry reasoned.

"Okay..., let's say that you are Mr. Flamel. Could we discuss this somewhere more private?" Harry asked, not wanting to lay his cards on the table here in the open.

"That's what I was actually out here for," the man proclaimed. And with that, he produced a piece of parchment from his left pocket. Remus, who was up until now silent, recognized the action and knew that Harry would be unfamiliar with the action.

"You have to read Harry. Then concentrate on what you've read and look right in front of you." The werewolf explained.

Harry was fascinated to see the house 'appear' between the houses 34 and 38 on the street and suddenly recalled something. "The Fidelius Charm," he breathed in awe.

The Fidelius Charm was a complex spell that he was only told about in stories before. Remus had explained why he was always especially reluctant to talk about the brotherly relationship between Sirius Black and his father, when that same man had been the secret-keeper for the Potter family and gave out the secret to Voldemort's Death Eaters. Remembering the other details about that man made the young boy think about the fact that Peter Pettigrew was currently still alive. Harry reminded himself to act on that particular piece of information when he arrived back home.

"You are correct. Shall we?" Mr. Flamel said and motioned towards the house.

...

Meeting Perenelle Flamel was interesting, since not only did she look about the same age as her husband (around 40, despite the fact that both had to be over 600 years old), she also acted like she was his mother. Looking him up and down with a proud look, hugging him regardless of his hand that was offered and last but not least, offering him something to eat and drink while saying that he had to eat properly since he was still a growing boy.

Only when they were all seated with a cup of tea in front of them did Harry remember what he was here for exactly.

"Oh!" He said suddenly. Quickly turning around a fumbling a bit with his backpack, he removed the stone from a cleverly hidden pocket and placed on the table in front of their hosts.

Remus gasped, recognizing the stone for what it was and gazing curiously at his nephew. He wasn't mad, some things are better not to share with others and he knew that the oncoming second year wasn't a thief. Then he realised it. That thing he had been asked by Harry to look into, Dumbledore mentioning something deadly, the Gringotts break-in and of course, his nephew suddenly not bringing it up anymore since springtime.

"That's it?" Mrs. Flamel asked with audible astonishment.

"Yes...?" Harry said uncertainly, now suddenly a lot less confident about removing it from its place.

"No demands, no trade, not even a simple deal?" The woman continued....

"Well....," Harry started and thought her cynical look turned to smugness but it disappeared as he continued. "I have some questions, if you don't mind that is. I mean, I know that's not mine but why didn't you have it in the first place?" Remus looked proudly at his nephew and turned his silently questioning face towards their hosts, also interested in the answer.

"We thought we gave it to a friend for protection." Nicolas spoke softly, bringing the attention back onto himself. "But we are most curious about how you came to be in possession of it actually. Last I

heard was that the stone was destroyed by a Dark wizard failing to obtain it."

"Oh.... Um...." Harry said, not knowing how to explain the reason that he felt he needed to obtain the stone only for giving it back to its owners in the first place.

"If you have trouble explaining it, I might have a way to help if you need it." Mrs. Flamel said in a friendly tone.

Harry just nodded.

"Do you know what a pensieve is?"

Harry nodded once again, having read about the device that somehow enables you to store and view memories.

And so it was that Harry showed the memories of his obtaining of the stone. After Mrs. Flamel explained how to extract the memories from his mind, he decided to fill the bowl with all of the pertaining ones. He showed them Dumbledore's announcement at the start of the year, the reading of the article about the Gringotts break-in, the event in the library that made him figure it out, the trial on the third-floor corridor and finally the rumours in the Great Hall about the event of Neville, Hermione and Ron.

Colourful cursing was not what he had expected when the three (Remus went along, since he didn't know about much of it) exited from the device that he'd been admiring to occupy his time.

"Well...", Nicolas said dryly when it was quiet once again. "That certainly differs from what we were told by Albus."

Mrs. Flamel wasn't quite as finished cursing after all, Harry found out.

"Thank you for removing my stone from that rather easy trap, Mr. Potter. I know that you don't wish anything in return for giving it back to us but is there anything we can give you as a reward?" Mr. Flamel asked with a smile.

Harry started to shake his head negatively, not wanting anything in return before he thought of something.

"Well..... As I said, I have some questions..." He said uncertainly.

"Go ahead."

"The story that I know about the Philosopher's Stone is that it is able to turn any metal into gold and produce the Elixir of Life which supposedly makes the drinker immortal." Harry started and looked to Mrs. Flamel to see the smug look at her husband appear again. "I don't want that." The look disappeared again.

"But seeing you the way that you look now....., doesn't fit." Harry continued, not sure how to explain it better. He looked down at the table while deeply in thought, not seeing the looks of apprehension on their hosts' faces. "I'm guessing that the Elixir of Life is more like the mythical 'Fountain of Youth', in that it returns the drinker to a younger age. Consequently, this still makes the drinker immortal as long as he drinks the Elixir regularly; depending on how much it rejuvenates the body." The young boy looked up again to the apprehensive looks and repeated, "I don't want that either. Besides....., I'm nearly twelve."

"However," he started while keeping eye contact this time. "Water from the 'Fountain of Youth' was also said to have healing capabilities." Harry trailed off and saw Remus' eyes widen from the corner of his eyes.

"My mother is currently a patient at the Long-Term Care Ward of Saint Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. She is in a coma from the result of spellfire originating from Bellatrix Lestrange during an attack on my family in January 1982." Harry pointed to the Philosopher's Stone that still lay on the table, untouched. "Is that able to cure my mother?"

Mr. and Mrs. Flamel slowly turned to each other, having heard the silent plea from the boy in front of them. Finally, after a minute or two, Mr. Flamel gave a tiny nod to his wife and turn back towards their guests.

"No." The man said but Harry could hear he had more to say. "That," here he pointed at the stone on the table, "is not able to cure your mother..... And neither is the real stone."

Harry's eyes widened this time with his werewolf uncle's. That made so much sense!

The Flamels refused to elaborate on the subject of curing his mother though Harry even asked if they knew of a normal way that might be able to lift the coma. His reasoning was that the old pair would have more knowledge than Harry would be able to gather in his own lifetime. However what did struck him with hope was that they didn't mention that she wasn't curable.

The foursome ate a light lunch, since Mrs. Flamel said she was unable to send out their guests while hungry. During it they discussed other things, with the subject of the Philosopher's Stone no longer coming up.

Remus and Mr. Flamel formed a tentative friendship, their love for history coming out in a simple comment which flowed into an hour-and-a-half conversation. Meanwhile, Mrs. Flamel mothered Harry while the boy asked regular questions. He had over three plates of lunch since she kept reloading it until the boy said he could take no more. The subject of the oncoming duelling tournament came up when Harry and Remus were about to leave and the hosts were happy to give them the tickets they needed, saying they could hardly let them leave with nothing for returning their stone, ignoring Harry when he said it wasn't real anyway.

The tournament turned out to be a real highlight of the vacation. They saw two matches of the main tournament, with one of them being between the last 16 contestants. It seemed the finals were booked way in advance and were separate from normal tickets. Though still, even Remus seemed to really enjoy the show of combat magic but it was an eye-opener for Harry himself. These people seemed to know so much about magic that the simple practice he did alone or with Tonks in the Room of Requirement was practically nothing. Everything from esoteric curses, to overpowering DADA spells, to simple household charms were used in harmony to form a fluent, silent and amazingly quick duelling strategy with the sole purpose of defeating your opponent.

The junior tournament was just as interesting to the pair of observers. These contestants were under seventeen, which was the only requirement to be able to enter. And though many seemed to be near the border, being 15 or 16 year of age, several of them were

younger and still able to hold their ground. Harry was just vibrating with energy about the whole thing and couldn't wait to enter himself, though he did realise that he would have to train a lot more.

This event seemed to mark the ending for their holiday, since they had visited just about everything they came to see. Beauxbatons Academy of Magic was unable to schedule in their visit but Harry didn't mind; he had already seen so much and was ready to return home.

Fortunately for Remus, Harry had agreed to magical transportation for their return home and with an international Portkey from the Rue de Magie, they were back in Diagon Alley within seconds.

That night when the pair returned to the inn, a sleepy Harry mumbled goodnight before heading to his room. Once there, he noticed the blank parchment still lying on his desk from before they left and remembered why it was there. He sat down, thought about it for a moment before picking up the quill.

Dear Madam Bones,

You may not remember but we met briefly a few months ago during the graduation ball at Hogwarts. I was accompanied by the lovely Miss Tonks who, if I'm not mistaken, is currently in your employ at the Auror Academy. However, that is not the reason for me contacting you this summer.

I've come upon something curious and I was hoping to do a little research before bringing it to anyone's attention. I've searched the public archives for the transcript of the trial of Sirius Black, however....

My apologies for the long wait, for the cliffhanger and the particularly long chapter.

As always, grammatical mistakes, typo's or just plain errors may be reported in the reviews or as a personal message and I'll do my best to correct them a.s.a.p.

The points awarding scene is partly copied from the original version of 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'.

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